

THE
MOURTRAY
FAMILY.

A Novel.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.



VOL. I.



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THE

MONTAGUE

FAMILY

HISTORY

OF THE

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THE FAMILY OF MOURTRAY.

CHAPTER I.

THE Family of Mourtray had for a long succession of ages been settled at Downton Hall, in one of the western counties of England: the estate annexed to this seat, though not of the first rate, had once been considerable enough to give consequence to its possessors, and no small influence in the county; but, by the diminution it had suffered during the civil wars, when part of it had been sold in support of the royal cause, this family had fallen from its ancient splendour; although it still retained, more by courtesy than right, a degree of distinction

amongst the neighbouring gentry, seldom allowed to persons of decayed fortunes. The name of Mourtray, too, had not wholly lost its influence amongst the old inhabitants of the county in the middling class; for they knew, by tradition, that this family had ever been the friends and protectors of their ancestors, and that want of means alone curtailed its natural munificence.

Six hundred a year was all that remained of the Downton estate; yet this small income had sufficed to enable some generations to live with ease and hospitality, till the immense influx of wealth which has poured into this kingdom of late years, added to the rapid progress of luxury; the rise of every article of life, and the increase of taxes, rendered it, at the period when this history commences, barely adequate to keep up the appearance of gentility.

Its present owner (originally a younger brother) had passed his youth in the army, where he had found his slender finances

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Its present owner (originally a younger brother), had passed his youth in the army, where he had found his slender finances no small obstacle to preferment; therefore, when, by the death of his elder brother, the estate devolved upon him, he was glad, as soon as peace was concluded, that he could quit a profession with which he had long been disgusted.

His next step was to marry a young lady of very small fortune, with whom he had formed an attachment when both were extremely young: with her he resolved to retire to Downton, and follow the good old custom of his ancestors, of residing entirely in the country.

This plan, at that time, met with no opposition from his bride: her situation,

previous to her marriage, had been very uncomfortable, poverty having obliged her to accept an asylum from a cross old uncle; and she did not consider the protection he afforded her as an adequate compensation for the wearisome attendance he exacted. Many years had thus passed, and she had the mortification to see her bloom begin to fade, with little or no prospect of happier days, as neither her own, nor her lover's circumstances, permitted their union.

When this at length took place, she was so happy to become the wife of the man she adored, to leave her tiresome old uncle, and have a house and will of her own, that she conceived it impossible she should ever wish the least change in her situation. Mourtray's plan had, besides, the advantage of novelty; for hitherto she had chiefly resided in London, where she had been in the habit of attending all the public amusements, because her uncle,
 who

who loved the world, chose to drag her about with him, whether agreeable to her or not: no wonder, therefore, that she should have been surfeited with them, or that her imagination should picture to itself infinite delight in the quiet of the country, in its rural amusements, and in the joy of breathing pure air.

It was the gayest season of the year, when Mrs. Mourtray, after a pleasant journey, first beheld her new habitation, situated in the midst of verdant downs, but which for many miles presented no other diversity of scenery, than occasionally a peep into the vale below, where a few small hamlets were thinly scattered. The uniformity of the downs being only broken by a narrow strip, or *patch*, of arable land here and there, and by some straggling clumps of firs perched on hills, which seemed more calculated to serve as beacons, than to ornament the landscape.

Yet even this tame prospect appeared charming to Mrs. Mourtray; and though Downton could not boast of many local beauties, the marks it exhibited of superior cultivation to the adjacent country, stamped it with an air of distinction, which prepossessed her in its favour at the first glance.

But far short was her delight to that of Mr. Mourtray; for, connected with the possession of Downton, were a thousand agreeable ideas, of love, liberty, and independence; with the recollection of his boyish days, of his grandfather's relations, of the ancient splendour of the family, and of various little plans of improvement that he had secretly meditated, if he ever were so happy to call his own, the two objects nearest to his heart, his wife and his native place.

In Mrs. Mourtray's present frame of mind, she could not fail of catching a portion

portion of her husband's partiality to Downton, though she was somewhat startled at the ruinous state of the house, till Mr. Mourtray assured her this could scarcely be called a disadvantage, as it denoted its antiquity; she was as easily persuaded, that the paddock of thirty acres of neglected meadow land, had a very park-like appearance, and that a small plantation of firs and evergreens, terminating in a kitchen-garden inclosed within mud walls, was full as delightful as the most celebrated pleasure-grounds in the kingdom. A copse that bounded their domain, which in reality was pretty, and perhaps appeared the more so, because it was the only thing like a wood that could be seen for miles, was viewed by both with equal rapture.

But as the romance of passion, according to the natural course of things, gradually declines,—for there is little to keep up its energy in the uneventful tenour of

domestic life,—insensibly the charms of Downton began to fade, particularly in the opinion of Mrs. Mourtray ; and the increase of the family produced new wants and desires.

Mourtray still said, and perhaps thought, he would not exchange it for the noblest seat in England ; he allowed, however, it was a pity he had not a little money to bestow upon it, for certainly the house wanted many repairs ; and though he did not wish to give it a modern appearance, and still less to fit it up like a citizen's villa, it would not be amiss if the apartments could be rendered more comfortable, and be furnished in a style suitable to the building. The grounds, too, he thought capable of much improvement ; at present, he must own, they looked rather forlorn and neglected.

But these regrets seldom escaped his lips, unless in very gloomy weather, or
when

when something had gone wrong in his farm: with an excellent understanding he possessed great equanimity of temper, and a quiet unconcernedness of mind, which made him rather insensible to slight inconveniences, little solicitous about trifles, and in general disposed to be satisfied with every thing about him. His passions were not easily roused, but whatever object animated them invariably retained its hold; hence, after marriage, though he discovered Mrs. Mourtray was not exactly what he had painted her in his youthful imagination, he continued most tenderly attached to her, when he had ceased being in love.

Fond of agriculture, of which he understood the theory far better than the practical part; fond of elegant literature, and fond of music, he had a perpetual fund of amusement in himself.

Too proud to seek society with the great, from whom he would not receive favours that his narrow income precluded him from the possibility of returning ; and too fastidious to associate with those of his neighbours, who were rude and illiterate, with whom his feelings could not correspond ; or with others, whose pleasures consisted in pursuits repugnant to his taste, his society was extremely confined ; and he habituated himself to live as much as possible concentrated in his family. His excursions seldom extended beyond his farm ; and as he disliked the diversions of the field, he was spared the expense of either dogs or horses.

Mrs. Mourtray, although she perfectly concurred with him in lamenting their scanty fortune, would by no means have agreed with him in the mode of spending a larger one. She thought money might be far better employed than in repairing an old mansion seated in a wilderness, or
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in improving grounds which nobody ever saw. The want of a carriage was one of the grievances she most severely felt, recollecting that, during her youth, she had the command of her uncle's; and though, immediately after her marriage, she had been perfectly satisfied with a *whisky*, drawn by an old blind horse, and perhaps would have been equally so in a covered cart, with her husband by her side; yet, in a short time, she longed for a more commodious vehicle, and would often say, if she had but a post-chaise, she should be completely happy. A pair of decent strong horses would (as she observed) not only do for farm work, but might occasionally be put into harness; and then they could sometimes make little trips from home, if only to amuse the children; these and a second-hand chaise would cost a mere trifle, and thus the dreary winter would be far more bearable, and they should not always be cooped up at home.

Mourtray's usual reply to these and similar observations, was a significant shake of his head.

Her temper, disposition, and inclinations, were exactly the reverse of his. Trifling concerns were matters of importance with her, whilst those of real consequence seemed only to glide over her mind; she was in a perpetual hurry and bustle about nothing at all, being incapable of attending to any serious occupation. Enjoying excellent health, with a large flow of spirits, she was in her manners uncommonly young of her age; hence when love ceased to be the principal end of her existence, she felt with increasing impatience the want of society, and the being excluded from those amusements, which she believed herself just as calculated to enjoy, as in the spring of life. Those accomplishments that she once possessed; and which had full as much share as her beauty in winning

ning her husband's heart, she had long neglected ; " talents," as she said, " being wasted in a desert." Good natured and well meaning, she seldom acted wrong, because she had no temptation to do so ; else she had so little command over herself, that she would have been in danger of erring, though she detested vice. Accustomed by Mourtray to be treated like a spoiled child, she frequently gave way, on very trivial occasions, to unavailing repinings ; but, partly from the habit of hearing them, and partly from the peculiar frame of his temper, though they sometimes teased for a moment, they gave him no material disturbance.

Every succeeding year, however, strengthened her motives of discontent, and even in some measure robbed him of his tranquillity ; for every succeeding year, the narrowness of their income became more keenly felt. A large family of children embarrassed *her* only
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for the time present, whilst his anxiety in this respect anticipated the future.

But death in early infancy reduced this numerous family, and only two attained maturity ; a son and daughter. The education of the former could not fail of being attended with a heavy expense ; but Mourtray having had an excellent one himself, considered it as the most estimable of all advantages ; and he curtailed many little luxuries, and even some necessities,—in his family, first to place his son Henry at Winchester College, and afterwards to maintain him decently at Oxford.

He was a wild lively youth, and though not absolutely ungrateful to his father for the sacrifices he made for his benefit, he was too averse to study to profit by them. Perhaps his mother might in some measure have contributed to this indolence ; he had always been
her

her favourite ; at home she never suffered him to be contradicted, unless when he opposed her will ; and she often hinted, that she saw no reason why he should be hurried into any profession, as Downton one day must belong to him : this strange language was the more indiscreet, as she knew by experience that it was inadequate to the supply of her own wants. Henry, however, soon had sufficient sense to see the necessity of doing something, and he promised to study the law.

Mourtray himself undertook the education of his daughter, sensible that he was qualified for the task ; for during that period of his life which he had passed in the army, instead of entering into scenes of riot and dissipation, as did many of his companions, he devoted all his leisure time to literary pursuits, and to the cultivation of his taste for music. He, therefore, played in a superior style on several instruments, had read a great deal, wrote
both

both correctly and elegantly, and, having an excellent memory, Emma became under his tuition highly accomplished : she had indeed such an aptitude for learning, that what he had undertaken from principle and necessity, he pursued from inclination. But the information she received was very different from that acquired by the frivolous and very expensive education in fashion. Mourtray's first object was to instil into her tender mind, clear and sound notions of religion and morality ; and his second, to enrich it with useful and elegant knowledge. Fond even as he was of music, he would not suffer her to devote too much time to it, so as to neglect more important acquisitions ; nevertheless, with her own genius and application, and his instructions, she became a very tolerable proficient.

Chance, too, befriended her eager desire of further improvement, particularly in regard to languages ; for an emigrant
French

French priest happened to wander to a small market-town, only two miles from Downton : he was a man of letters, spoke and wrote his own language with the utmost purity, and perfectly understood all its refinements ; he had likewise a thorough knowledge of geography, history, and natural philosophy, with no inconsiderable skill in drawing.

The deplorable indigence to which he was reduced, obliged him to try and gain his livelihood by teaching French ; but in such an insignificant place, so few persons had either inclination or ability to pay the very small recompense he required for his pains, that the poor man would probably have starved, had not Mourtray engaged him to give his daughter lessons ; and M. Du Masson was too happy, to acquire such a charming and intelligent little pupil.

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From the time of his first introduction, he walked daily to Downton; his pay indeed was inconsiderable, but he frequently was invited to dinner, which in his circumstances was very convenient; and as the family became better acquainted with him, he was sometimes requested to pass the night there, and even to stay several days when the weather was bad. It may easily be imagined, that Emma derived no small advantage from these visits.

Dancing was the only accomplishment that neither of her preceptors were qualified to teach; and probably she would not have acquired this in her childhood, but for the following circumstance.

About three miles from Downton, there was a magnificent place called Wilmington Park, belonging to a nobleman, who, on Mourtray's settling at Downton, came to see him; and since that period, annual visits

visits had been interchanged between them, though always with the utmost formality, and often without their meeting. The ladies had been still less neighbourly, for Lady Wilmington made it a rule never to visit the *natives*; though, as her lord kept a public day, it was understood in the country, that she had on those occasions no objection to their company; but several declined profiting by her condescension; and, in numbers, the males far exceeded the females at her table.

Whether Mrs. Mourtray might not have been tempted to visit at Wilmington on this footing, is uncertain; but her husband settled the point, by protesting she should not.

It happened once that the chapel at Wilmington was undergoing a thorough repair, which occasioned the countess deigning to attend the service at her parish

rish church; and as this was also that of Downton, she saw there, for the first time, Mrs. Mourtray and the little Emma, then about ten years of age: the uncommon loveliness of the child struck her the more, as she had the greatest predilection for beauty; and she could not resist stopping, as she passed the Mourtray's pew in her way to the church-door, to notice Emma, as did likewise her two daughters, the youngest of whom, catching hold of her hand, protested she must and should go home with her. This Mourtray, with a smile, said, was impossible. "And why so?" cried Lady Wilmington, whose raptures of admiration had not yet subsided; "and why so?" Then recollecting that she had totally overlooked Mrs. Mourtray, though she had courtesied to her husband, she added, turning to her with a gracious smile, though not directly addressing her, "Perhaps Mrs. Mourtray will have the goodness to indulge my little girl, and suffer

fer this sweet child to go home with us?"

Mrs. Mourtray was very ready to consent ; not so Mr. Mourtray ; he made objections: Lady Wilmington, piqued, would not have insisted ; but Lady Bell, her daughter, so vehemently urged her request, to which Emma timidly added her entreaties, that Mourtray yielded ; and it was agreed, as the days were short, that she should pass the night at Wilmington ; and that the young ladies and their governess should carry her home in the coach the next morning.

This visit was a most delightful event to Emma, and was followed by many others, to which Mourtray no longer objected ; as, soon after the first, Lady Wilmington called in her curricule at Downton, where she staid at least ten minutes.

Mrs.

Mrs. Mourtray hastened to return her visit, and shortly had the satisfaction of being invited to the next public dinner; to which she went with her husband, much against his inclinations. No further intimacy took place between the parents, but the children often met; and the countess having engaged an excellent dancing-master to stay some time in her house, she proposed, by way of inspiring her daughters with emulation, that Emma should share with them in his instructions, in which Mr. and Mrs. Mourtray acquiesced. The former, however, was sorry that circumstances put it out of his power to have his daughter taught at home; not approving that she should often pass a week or fortnight with persons in a sphere of life so different from that in which she was destined to move.

Mrs. Mourtray was at first hurt at the little attention paid to herself by the Wilmington family; but custom, in some

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measure, reconciled her to it; as the same mode of conduct, with little or no variation on their part, continued during several years. The news of their arrival in the country never failed putting her into an unpleasant bustle; and the old blind horse regularly dragged her to Wilmington the first fair morning afterwards, where, for the sake of her daughter, it happened to her sometimes to be admitted; but the behaviour of the ladies was so cold and unpleasant, that she always felt relieved when the visit was paid and returned.

To Mourtray's infinite satisfaction, she had long since declined attending the public dinners, not choosing to sport an old-fashioned wardrobe. To do her justice, however, she was disposed to overlook many personal mortifications for the sake of her daughter, who continued to be the favourite companion of the ladies Fontelieu (Lord Wilmington's daughters),
till

till she was near fifteen, when the family went to Ireland; and almost three years elapsed before they returned into — shire.

Emma was transported with joy, when she heard of the arrival of her friends; but it was of short duration, for they did not seem at all disposed to remember their former intimacy. The pretty child that had amused them was now become a most beautiful and accomplished young woman; this however they only knew by report; for although they had been some weeks in the country, various excuses had been framed for neither visiting nor receiving her.

A little sketch of the Wilmington family may serve to elucidate their conduct.

CHAP. II.

THE earl of Wilmington was, by birth and fortune, one of the persons of the most consequence in —shire, where he was extremely jealous of maintaining entire his great parliamentary interest, and guarding it from encroachment: no other consideration could induce him to pass a few months every year in a place he detested.

His usual time of quitting London was the end of August, when with an immense retinue, and every appendage of rank and opulence, but with an aching and reluctant heart, he repaired with his family, as averse as himself, to vegetate (as they called it) at Wilmington Park. During four tedious months, which he thus sacrificed to the grand object of his life, he courted popularity, and made a display

play of hospitality, which was always observed to rise or fall, in proportion as a general election was more or less near.

But amidst his pomp, magnificence, and occasional profusion, some little meanness never failed to lurk; and cordiality, the zest of all entertainments, was wanting in his. Nobody ever gave him credit for true generosity, or liberality of sentiment; and when even he conferred a favour, it generally proved that he had his own interest in view.

One day a whole corporation would feast with him upon turtle, and be drunk with claret and Burgundy;—while the next he would anxiously watch the progress of a solitary bottle upon his table. One moment he would descant, with wonderful humanity, on the claims the lower orders of the community had on the opulent; and the next, secretly lecture his steward for giving away broken frag-

fragments of victuals to the poor of the village.—Thus by parsimony he counteracted his own purposes, and rarely succeeded in attaching heartily to his interest those he wished to gain.

Nor had he better success in his attempts to appear gracious and condescending; for, though he had attained the talent of smiling on those he hated, to a great degree of perfection, and by long habit an almost perpetual simper hovered on his lips, still his native haughtiness was more or less perceptible, in despite of all his efforts to conceal it. His dark scowling eyes rarely ventured to meet those he addressed, because he dreaded lest they should betray his thoughts, which often were exactly the reverse of what his smooth courtly tongue expressed.

Indeed nothing could be more ridiculous than the set of phrases he indiscriminately used, when he wished to carry a

point; for they were not only expressive of the highest opinion of others, but of the meekest notions of himself.

In town, all the time he did not devote to politics was passed in low and obscure intrigues; but in the country he denied himself such recreations, as the actions of so great a personage could not possibly be concealed; and these, however fashionable in London, might, by the vulgar, be viewed in a light detrimental to his fancied popularity.—This was one of his reasons for hating Wilmington; and another, which had nearly as much weight with him, was the enormous expense occasioned by his residence there—short as he contrived to make it.

Lady Wilmington, still haughtier than her lord, but with at least more openness of character, never attempted to assume humility.—She was of the first *ton* in every respect, and no greater penance could be imposed

imposed upon her, than presiding at the entertainments policy induced him to give their country neighbours, whom she considered as a race of beings, as totally distinct from herself and family, as cats, dogs, or monkeys.

Seated, in state, at the head of her table, listless and languid, she affected ill health, to avoid the trouble of speaking to her guests, whose names she seldom chose to remember; but if necessity obliged her to address them, she had the happiest knack imaginable at confounding one person with another; and then, as frequently this gave offence, her apology of "well, it is all the same, Mr. *this* or Mr. *that*," was not likely to remove it. If any thing struck her fancy, which she could not resist communicating to her family, she conversed with them in a sort of cant language, unintelligible to the rest of the company, whom she suffered her daughters to *quizz*, but she never joined in any of

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their jokes, as these she thought derogatory to her dignity.

Capricious, ill-tempered, and disagreeable, as she made herself, she was not absolutely ill-natured; and the very persons she thus treated, she would, when in good humour, willingly have served. With quick and lively parts, she united a degree of judgment that seemed inconsistent with such inordinate pride; and when she chose (which often happened when she considered herself in her proper element, that is to say, amid the fine world) she could be extremely agreeable. There her character for rigid virtue, honour, and integrity, was universally acknowledged. Her lord's meanness she detested, and never failed to counteract it whenever it lay in her power; but his avarice often abridged her means: had these been greater, she probably would have been generous, as munificence was, in her opinion,

nion, one of the attributes of illustrious birth.

The most perfect indifference subsisted between herself and the earl, which, though she was too sincere to disguise, yet, as the head of the family, she invariably tried to support his consequence, as well as to live with him on decent terms, for the sake of her children, and to maintain the dignity of her own character.

On the other hand, the earl, fond of dissimulation, appeared in public as polite and attentive a husband as he was the reverse in private; though he secretly, at all times, stood in awe of her principles, and cautiously guarded from her knowledge those actions which he knew would expose him to her animadversions.

Lord and lady Wilmington had only one son and two daughters. Lord Fontelleu, the son, though in his twenty-third

year, was little known to the world, having received his education abroad, and at this time was upon his travels; but those who had seen him when a boy, remembered him with partiality.

The daughters, lady Elizabeth and lady Isabella Fontelieu, were much better known; both were thought beauties of the first class in their own family.—The former, now near one-and-twenty years of age, had been introduced into the world already some years; her pretensions to beauty were founded on a very tall, straight, and lean figure, without either grace or elegance; and on features perfectly regular, which never conveyed any other expression than that of haughty ill-humour: large blue glassy eyes, a dead-white skin, and hair little differing from *that* in colour, compleated the assemblage of her charms. Yet, when dressed to advantage, and with the aid of *rouge*, at a distance she appeared rather handsome.

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In disposition, she inherited, in deeper shades, all lady Wilmington's defects, but with a very inferior understanding, and without any of her good or agreeable qualities.—Grave and reserved, she seldom relaxed from her stately manners, even in the bosom of her family.—Though she had little affection for her mother, she knew she was admired by many, and, without discriminating wherefore, her behaviour she made the model of her own.—But she had not talents for imitation; and when she attempted to double the part of her mother, she equally failed in playing the great or the agreeable lady.—Therefore, neither in town nor country, neither with the old nor young, did she gain favour; her father excepted. He loved her, because he fancied she resembled him, and because he conceived a portion of his own cunning, which he dignified by the name of wisdom, lay hidden under her apparent reserve.—That small share

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of

of lady Wilmington's affection she possessed, she owed to the noble blood that flowed in her veins; an advantage which rendered all her children of a superior cast in her eyes. Both parents were equally astonished, and herself still more, that she had not yet received a single proposal of marriage!

Lady Isabella, two years younger than her sister, made her *debut* in the world with much better success. She was, indeed, accused of being too giddy and volatile, but she appeared good natured and obliging.—People did not suspect that, under this thoughtless appearance, she concealed infinite art; and though at times she gave offence by certain saucy airs and impertinence of manners, allowances were made for a very pretty girl, high in rank, spoiled by flattery, and with a prodigious flow of spirits, that it was supposed she could not always command.—Hence her errors met with unusual lenity

nity—such was the captivation of her person.—Many men admired her, but only one or two had as yet ventured to think of her as a wife; their proposals she had laughed at in her heart, but her rejection had not been ungracious.

In a house where haughty reserve seemed adopted as the order of the day, it is easy to imagine, that her lively affability, engaging manners, and enchanting smiles, must have made her many partizans: she alone cast a cheerful ray through the gloom which pervaded the rest of the family; and her simple country neighbours never suspected, whilst she was loading them with civilities, and listening with apparent interest to their long stories and dull domestic details, that she was all the while, to use her own expression, *quizzing* them.

Although she had not a regular feature in her face, nobody perceived it till after

an attentive examination ; because, altogether, it was extremely agreeable, full of animation, and generally very merry, which favoured the display of most beautiful teeth. — A charming complexion, with a luxuriance of fine hair, and a light elegant figure, rendered her justly an object of admiration.

She was her mother's particular favourite, who had, however, too much penetration not to see that she had a turn for coquetry ; and she well knew that she had a spirit impatient of restraint ; but she saw her foibles with the more indulgence, because she admired her person, and was often diverted by her gay humour.

Not so lord Wilmington :—accustomed to frequent women of a loose description, he thought ill of the sex in general, and very early he saw in lady Isabella's character such cause of distrust and suspicion, that

that he insisted upon her having a governess; as her mother's ill, or pretended ill health, precluded the possibility of her being always with her daughters.—The governess was a French woman, strongly recommended for the strictness of her principles. She had no bright talents, which the earl thought so much the better, as she would be the less likely to have the spirit of intrigue; and as he judged of her by himself, he endeavoured to secure her fidelity by magnificent promises of future liberality. Strange as it may appear, lady Isabella's cunning and curiosity often kept him in alarm; for he knew, that, if by any unfortunate chance she should discover some of his actions that would not bear a scrutiny, she would take infinite delight in revealing them.

During the period allotted for the residence of the family at Wilmington, they seldom invited many of their fashionable friends to visit them: the earl always found
some

some excuse for denying himself the pleasure of receiving them, well knowing that a country-house full of company, though very agreeable, is attended with no small expense ; and he suffered enough by *what* he imposed upon himself, to further his views in the county.—Avarice and ambition incessantly struggled in his breast : hence seldom any triumph was obtained by one passion, without inflicting a pang on the other.

Lady Wilmington, who lived much in the world when in town, was not sorry, for a few months, to live with comparative quiet in the country : the young ladies, indeed, secretly murmured at being sequestered from their acquaintance ; but they had no voice in this matter.

Lord Wilmington having, by his Irish affairs, and other causes, been prevented for three years from making his annual journey to his western estate, he judged
it

It prudent to compensate for his long absence, by giving more frequent entertainments. — He had at this time several points at heart, and he thought nothing would more conduce to carry them, than giving a few balls.—In the first place, he hoped this favourite diversion would win him the hearts of all the wives, mothers, and daughters, in the country; and these he valued merely because they had, as he presumed, no small influence over the men.

And, secondly, he wished extremely to marry his eldest daughter to a rich baronet lately come of age, whose ancestors had always named one member for a neighbouring borough, and the Wilmington family the other; but by the earl's manœuvres, during Sir William Elliston's (the young baronet) minority, he had contrived to circumvent his guardians, and bring in both members. Having heard that Sir William not only resented this

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usurpation, but publicly declared his resolution of supporting his rights at the next election, and had already begun canvassing with success, he flattered himself, if he could draw him to these fêtes, that he might cajole him out of his purpose; and should he not succeed in this, if he would marry lady Elizabeth (having higher views for her sister) he did not in the least doubt that he should be able to dispose of him as he pleased.

He had no sooner determined on this measure, than he hastened to impart it to his family, though not the motives in which it originated, leaving the necessary preparations entirely to them; only recommending that the fêtes might be very shewy, yet conducted with the smallest expense possible.

The ladies Fontelieu were nearly overwhelmed with joy at these agreeable tidings; and now they bethought themselves
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of Emma, who would be an excellent assistant in many little decorations that they resolved instantly to set in hand.

The countess, who approved of their associating Emma in this task, and who besides had some curiosity to see her, sent her carriage and a civil note to Mrs. Mourtray, to request she would permit her daughter to spend some days at Wilmington.

This was complied with to Emma's infinite satisfaction; and now she ascribed the late neglect of her friends entirely to the hurry and unsettled state which she imagined had attended their first arrival in the country, and was confirmed in this opinion by the flattering reception she received, particularly from lady Isabella, who seemed ready to devour her with caresses.

Lady

Lady Wilmington could scarcely believe her eyes when she saw Emma; for, pretty as she had ever thought her, she had no idea of finding her now become a perfect beauty, and could not help regretting, that so many charms should be bestowed on an insignificant country girl.

The earl was gone to town, that he might not (as he said) be disturbed in his important avocations by the arrangements making for the fête; and he only intended returning home the day before the first ball.

As the ladies Fontelieu had imagined, they derived considerable assistance from Emma's taste and ingenuity: she invented a thousand pretty devices to ornament the ball and supper rooms, her needle and pencil being employed for this purpose with the greatest perseverance; troubling

troubling herself little with preparations for her own appearance ; she had, indeed, no clothes that were otherwise than extremely plain and simple ; yet, with her fine figure, whatever she wore always appeared to advantage ; and her natural good taste taught her to fold her charming hair round her head, in imitation of antique busts and medals, in the most becoming manner possible.

The Countess, however, chose on this occasion that all the young people should wear an uniform ; and, under pretence that Emma might not be able to procure exactly the same materials as those used for this purpose in her family, she presented her with a complete dress, which was thankfully accepted, and thereby relieved Mrs. Mourtray from one of those petty distresses that had agitated her exceedingly for some time ; she remained, however, dissatisfied, upon the whole, with
 lady

lady Wilmington, for the little notice she had taken of her ; but she would not, for this reason, punish herself by declining the invitations she received, in common with all the rest of the neighbourhood, to attend the approaching festivity.

CHAP. III.

ON the day appointed for the first ball, the Downton family repaired to Wilmington; even Mourtray, at his darling Emma's intreaties, consented to be of the party: their arrival, owing to the fidget and hurry of Mrs. Mourtray, was somewhat premature; for the earl was yet at table, and the lamps and candles were not lighted above stairs.

Lady Wilmington, thus surprised, was by no means in good humour: she very coolly saluted the party; lady Elizabeth followed her example; and lady Isabella, who might have countenanced them, had retired to dress. Mourtray already wished himself at home, blaming the weakness that had induced him, contrary to his better judgment, to mix with people who had so little cordiality in their disposition.

sition. Mrs. Mourtray found occupation in admiring the fanciful ornaments of the saloon; and Emma, in anticipating, in imagination, the pleasures to come.

The arrival of more company took off from the restraint and formality that had hitherto prevailed; and the unanimous applause bestowed on the elegant appearance of the apartments restored lady Wilmington to good humour.

She now condescended not only to regard Emma with approbation, but to acknowledge that her skill and ingenuity had, in some degree, contributed to transform her house into a fairy palace.

It was not till after the dancing had begun that lord Wilmington made his appearance: when he arrived, his daughters and Emma were performing a reel, to the great admiration of the whole company. Mixed in the crowd, he remained

a fi-

silent spectator ; but no sooner was the dance over, than, taking lady Isabella aside, he enquired who had made the third in the reel. If he felt any surprise at the alteration a few years had made in Emma, he did not express it ; but hastening to seek Mourtray, in guarded but very flattering terms, he congratulated him on having so lovely a daughter.

Sir William Ellifston, the secret object of the *fête*, did not arrive till a very late hour : heavy and inanimate, without grace or vivacity, he was not likely to add to its lustre, or to gain favour in the eyes of the ladies. Lady Elizabeth chose not to comprehend her father's hints to be particularly civil, but avoided him with marked dislike. Lady Isabella felt no other inclination than to laugh at him ; and Emma had the choice of so many partners, that she never was at liberty to dance with him when he asked her.

He

He seemed more disposed to admire her, than either of the ladies Fontelieu; but when he understood she had no fortune, he very prudently ceased to notice her.

Lord Wilmington, who attentively watched all his motions, finding one of his schemes would prove abortive, became doubly anxious to succeed in the other: to this end, after supper, where Champagne had not been spared, he contrived to draw sir William into a corner, and began to ply him with fine speeches, repeatedly mentioning his late worthy father, his most valuable friend, never enough to be lamented; yet fortunate in having left a representative, that promised to be exactly like himself, with whom he hoped to have the honour of living as good neighbours ought to do.

Sir William, who had listened with his eyes wider open than usual, finding at length

length that the Earl was silent, very coolly said, that it was the first time he had heard that ever his Lordship and his father had been in habits of intimacy.

“ O ! we were the best friends in the world ; on all occasions drew together ; never had but one opinion between us, my dear sir.”

“ Then it is the more extraordinary,” drily observed the Baronet, “ that so dear a friend of my father’s should have put his son under the necessity of asserting his long established rights !”

“ I will convince you in one moment,” cried Lord Wilmington, “ that what I did in regard to — was with the purest and best of motives ; all for your good, upon my honour ; but let me explain”

The dancers at this instant separating the gentlemen, Sir William, without waiting for the explanation, walked out of the room, where he appeared no more.

Lord Wilmington, provoked beyond all imagination to be foiled by a young man, whose stupid look had encouraged him to believe he would be a fit subject to work upon; and sorely vexed to have been at so much expense for so little purpose, no longer took any share in the general festivity; revolving in his mind all the torments of a future contested election. Part of his chagrin, however, he vented on Lady Elizabeth; whom he pretended had, by her ill-timed airs, disgusted a person, whose acquaintance, she knew, he was very desirous of cultivating.

As, in fact, this was the first intimation he had in direct terms given her of it, she warmly defended herself; and artfully

fully insinuated, that probably he had heard some unguarded jokes her sister had passed upon him. This turned the Earl's anger into another channel; but he was forced to smother it, as Lady Isabella, who was flying here and there, never two instants in the same place, gave him no opportunity of venting it; and, in despite of his ill humour, the ball was kept up with great spirit till a very late hour.

Emma, who had never seen any thing of the kind before, had been by far the happiest person present; and she alone, of all the female guests, was retained at Wilmington, because she danced to perfection; and was, besides, of so much use to the young ladies.

The second ball was to take place on the third day after the first; as Lord Wilmington wisely considered, that, by making the interval so short, much that was

prepared for the former would do for the latter.

Amongst those who continued, as well as Emma, inmates at Wilmington, was a young man, heir to a title and estate in the county; but at present, being dependent on his mother, was kept by her on a very slender allowance; his name was Sydney, and his exterior was by no means in his favour, for he was so very plain, that Lady Isabella surnamed him *the fright*: in figure, however, he was tolerable, and had perfectly the air of a gentleman. But after the first *coup d'œil* was over, it was impossible to think him very ugly, for goodness and intelligence were strongly marked on his countenance; and as he danced admirably, even Lady Isabella, at last, began to think him less hideous.

Emma, with a light heart, free from all art or design, and only wishing to enjoy,

as

as fully as possible, the present moment, was particularly delighted to be his partner; and though he behaved with the most exact attention to all the young ladies, he seemed to choose her by preference.

The second ball proved still more agreeable than the first; and Lord Wilmington did not at all lament, after what he had seen of Sir William Elliston, that he did not appear at it.

Emma now returned to Downton; but she continued, during the whole autumn, a frequent guest at Wilmington. The ladies Fontelieu, especially Lady Isabella (or, as she was more commonly called in her own family, Lady Bell), found infinite resources in their intimacy with the accomplished Emma, to which the Countess did not object; though she took due care to impress her mind with a proper sense of her great condescension, in thus distinguishing

guishing her from the herd of *native misses*. Still her favour did not extend to Mrs. Mourtray, who, she said, she believed to be a mighty good sort of a body, but very heavy in hand.

It may easily be imagined that a young lively girl like Emma had not sufficient experience to discern how little cause she had to be flattered by this preference; which gratified her, because it procured her a thousand amusements unattainable at home. Indeed, both Lady Wilmington and Lady Elizabeth rather inspired her with awe and respect, than with any warm degree of affection; but Lady Bell's shew of fondness wrought on her unsuspicious mind, and she felt convinced of the friendship of a person, whom she viewed with admiration. With a heart disposed to overflow with gratitude for every attention shewn her, she loved her with that fervour of youth, which ardently seeks some object on whom to lavish those affections,

much

much warmer at her age and in her situation than afterwards, when they seldom fail being impaired by a commerce with the world. So many causes, therefore, attracting her to Wilmington, insensibly she acquired a taste for company ; and a dislike, which she scarcely dared to acknowledge even to herself, to the dull sameness of Downton.

Since she had been admitted into the society of her *fine* neighbours, the little excursions she occasionally made with her mother in the one-horse-chaise had quite a different effect upon her to what they had formerly ; then they used to be contrived and executed to her no small satisfaction ; but now, to jig along for miles over the bleak downs, with her hair blowing about her ears ; to meet, at the end of such penance, people who lived quite out of the world, who had no other topics of conversation than the uninteresting occurrences of their own domestic

mestic concerns, or the repetition of stale news, was extremely distasteful to her.

Therefore, from the time Lord Wilmington's carriage brought her home, till it returned to convey her back to Wilmington, her whole thoughts centered there; for there alone she seemed to live.

Mrs. Mourtray could not fail of observing what passed in her daughter's mind, but she indulgently excused it; sensible, that since she who was so much older, and whose retirement originally had been voluntary, too often found it very irksome, it must be infinitely more so to a young person in the bloom of eighteen.

Mourtray, though desirous that his Emma should join to the more essential virtues the grace of polished manners, did

did not thoroughly approve her living so much with people from whom she would be too apt to imbibe a turn for dissipation and extravagance; with a multitude of desires, that could not possibly be gratified; but when he considered that their stay in the country never exceeded a few months, and that then she must resume her former way of life, he doubted whether it would not be an unjustifiable cruelty to oppose visits that seemed to make her so happy, and which were attended with little expense: the ladies at Wilmington not thinking it worth while to take much pains about their appearance in the article of dress; simplicity, therefore, was the fashion there.

Sydney's birth and future consequence recommended him to Lord and Lady Wilmington's notice: he was pressed to repeat his visits to them as often as he chose; and he was happy to make them frequent, attracted to Wilmington by the

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hopes

hopes of meeting Emma, whose beauty, modesty, and talents, had made an impression, never to be effaced, on his mind. The ladies Fontelieu he regarded with no other sentiment than profound respect.

Lady Elizabeth, however, to the astonishment of all who knew her, descended from the pinnacle of pride, on which she had fixed her station, to be civil and courteous to him; her grave reserve melted into gay frankness at his approach, and she would freely converse, and even laugh with him. The quiet of the country gave her leisure for reflection: reluctantly she sometimes owned to herself, that she had not hitherto (as she had once expected) seen all the fine men of the *ton* at her feet. Sydney's birth was not much inferior to her own; his mother might enlarge his income; it would, therefore, be no disgrace to her to marry him; and if she condescended to bestow her handsome person on his ugly one, she should lay him under

under such an obligation, that, with his goodness of heart and sweetness of temper, would induce him to be the meekest and most submissive of husbands.

In consequence of this plan she sought to allure him, by detailing to him what, in her opinion, was most valuable,—her great connections, her father's immense wealth, and the influence he had with government; which might so advantageously be employed in favour of any person whom he esteemed.

These hints, and others still more intelligible, being invariably received by him with the coldest indifference, as if it were impossible he could in any way be concerned in them, she totally altered her manner, and relapsed into her wonted haughtiness.

The whole of Lady Elizabeth's behaviour to Sydney, with all its variations,

afforded infinite diversion to lady Bell; though, on better acquaintance, she often acknowledged that *the fright*, when not in a sententious mood, could be very agreeable. Her quick penetration soon made her discover, that he secretly felt a decided preference to Emma; this she considered as a dreadful impeachment on his taste: had he shewn the least partiality to herself, she would have ridiculed it as a monstrous presumption in a man with such a face; though she might have amused herself, whilst in the country, for want of better sport, with flirting with him. At length she settled, in her own mind, that it would be a very good joke to turn his head, and easy to efface the slight impression Emma might have made upon his heart; but she had too much confidence in her charms to call to their assistance such auxiliaries as her sister had employed. Each day she tried to fix his attention, by the display of some beauty which might have escaped his notice: she

drop-

dropped her clog, when walking with him, that he might put it on; she caught her fine hair in the bushes, that he might extricate it; sometimes she could not pull on her gloves without his aid. Then, in conversation, she adapted herself to his humour; became sentimental, and restrained her natural vivacity. In short, she practised a thousand arts to ensnare the heart of a man, who was perfectly indifferent to her, merely by way of temporary amusement!

Although this conduct might have succeeded with some men, it had no other effect on Sydney, than to fill him with disgust: respect and politeness, indeed, obliged him to disguise this; but as his disposition was remarkably frank and sincere, he could not always prevent his countenance from betraying his feelings.

Lady

Lady Bell, however, soon grew weary, when she found she could not touch the heart of *the fright*; but, less piqued than her sister, never having had any serious views, she continued, after she had dropped her design, to treat him with a good-humoured familiarity.

Emma, young and inexperienced, had comprehended little of these manoeuvres of her friends, though she had sometimes thought Lady Bell too free in her manner towards Sydney; but this she attributed to giddiness, the only defect she could perceive in her.

Of Sydney's sentiments in regard to herself, she entertained but a vague suspicion; nor did she trouble herself about the matter. She liked him, as a pleasant, intelligent acquaintance, and esteemed the good qualities she distinguished in his character; but she seldom allowed him a place in her thoughts.

Con-

Content and happy to be under the same roof with her, she was the only object Sydney saw or listened to with interest: too conscious that his person was not formed to inspire love, he had no sort of wish to explain his feelings to her; thinking it but too probable, that she would not listen to him with complacency. Yet, though he scarcely dared to indulge the faintest hope that ever he should touch her heart, he could not persuade himself to make any efforts to conquer a passion, that, in its infancy, is attended with so much pleasure; and he thought, if once he could establish himself firmly in her good opinion, it was not impossible that she might in time (having so excellent an understanding) overlook his personal disadvantages, and be prevailed upon to accept his hand when his own situation might embolden him to offer it to her.

Her

Her want of fortune gave him infinite satisfaction, as he should have an opportunity of proving the disinterestedness of his affection; and her retired life in the country not only delighted him, because he should have the fewer rivals to encounter, but also because she would be the more likely to retain that purity and simplicity of character which he adored still more than her beauty.

One thought alone disturbed his present happiness; this was, by what means he should gain access to her, after the departure of the family from Wilmington. His own abode, though in the same county, was at a great distance from Downton, where he had never visited, nor been encouraged to do so, conformably to the rule Mourtray had adopted concerning visiting; and unless he were prematurely to declare his views, contrary to his wishes, he saw no pretence that
he

he could frame for intruding upon the Mourtrays.

He lived alone at a farm-house belonging to his mother, Lady Clannarmon, where a few rooms were fitted up for his use: she was his only female relation, and resided at Florence; but had she been in England, she could not, for reasons too well known to himself, have been of any use to him on this occasion.

CHAP. IV.

THE time now approached which the Wilmington family had fixed for their departure from the country. Emma was making them a farewell visit, and sincerely grieving at the severe loss she should experience by their absence; whilst the ladies Fontelieu, so far from sharing in her regrets, were incessantly enumerating all the pleasures that awaited them in town.

Their conversation now turned on no other subjects than public places, or in discussions on fashions; and their invention was already busily employed in preparations for a brilliant appearance on the ensuing birth-day.

Emma, with a half-stifled sigh, listened to subjects so foreign to her views and pursuits;

pursuits; her imagination all the while strongly contrasting the different scenes and occupations that awaited her, during a solitary winter to be passed at Downton.

Lady Elizabeth, shrewdly suspecting what was passing in her mind, indulged herself in dwelling with more than ordinary glee on these matters, having been extremely piqued that Sydney, the night before he left Wilmington, when they had a little *impromptu* ball, had not once asked her to dance, but had contrived twice to get Emma for his partner. To be revenged, therefore, on the person who had caused this abominable slight, she resolved to tantalize her with fine descriptions of fêtes: at some of these, she insinuated, she had been the object of general homage; men in town knowing how to distinguish people; and, she added, that her style of dress never failed to be imitated

imitated by all fashionable young women.

Lady Bell, little disposed to allow of the superiority which she thus arrogated to herself, burst into a provoking fit of laughter, which so enraged her sister, as she could not prove what she had advanced, that, to get rid of the subject, she suddenly affected a kind consideration for Emma, in whose presence she said, "It was cruel to talk of things quite out of her line!"

Lady Bell congratulated her on the sudden turn her disposition had taken, thus delicately to spare the feelings of others.

Lady Elizabeth, without deigning a reply, turning to Emma, said, "You must often have observed, Miss Mourtray, that my sister deals much in irony, mistaking

taking it for wit ; and as she never spares it on any occasion, though she only came out last winter, she managed, before the end of it, to affront half of our acquaintance."

" No such thing," retorted Lady Bell : " My maxim is, laugh when I can ; be serious when I must ; and people are much less offended with jokes, which, if they have wit, they can return, and if they have not, they don't comprehend, than at dull importance, that seems disdainfully to look down upon all the world."

" Very fine, Ma'am !—and as I have no inclination to descend, so as to enter the lists with you, I leave you to enjoy your fancied wit !" Then, rising with more than usual state, Lady Elizabeth left the room.

Lady

Lady Bell, accustomed to these sisterly disputes, exclaimed as she shut the door, "How I do delight in making my solemn sister angry! Poor thing! She did not take at all, I assure you: the men say she is as stiff as a poker; and the women are afraid of her, she is so proud and prudish."

"Hush, dear Lady Bell," cried Emma; "Consider, you are speaking of your sister; and why should you delight in vexing her?"

"Because her pride is insufferable: but never ask me to account for motives; mine are always determined by the impulse of the moment."

"This may not always be safe," said Emma, shaking her head.

"Hang reflection! I cannot, however, so entirely dismiss it, as not to feel miserable,

miserable, my sweet Emma, that your cruel fate will not suffer you to mix amongst us : my heart bleeds to think, that, while I am flying from operas to balls, from concerts to assemblies, you will be moping over the fire with *papa* and *mamma*, and scarcely ever see a human being, except the fat parson of the parish."

"No, I shall not be moping over the fire ; for, by your ladyship's account of London hours, I shall be in my first sleep long before your amusements begin."

"Lord ! how stupid ! I should die if I went to bed before I had quite tired myself with racketing about."

And then, as Emma was on the point of returning home, Lady Bell renewed her assurances of unalterable affection ; and that, on her return, she would amuse her with an exact account of her proceedings

ceedings in London; "For I must not write to you," said she; "Mamma won't let me; she says she hates corresponding *misses*."

Emma scarcely heard her last words; her heart was too full of sorrow at parting with lady Bell, on the sincerity of whose friendship she placed perfect reliance. The farewell she received from the rest of the family was short and civil, and she endeavoured to appear composed; but when the chaise that conveyed her home drove through the great gates, at the Park Lodge, for the last time, she felt a sensation of despondency that all her efforts could not shake off.

A thick fog that morning enveloped Downton; nothing was to be seen clearly, except the tops of the tall dismal firs; the house, propped up on one side, looked, when she was near enough to distinguish it, desolate and neglected; many of the
windows

windows were shut up, and from one or two chimnies only arose any smoke.— Instead of a hall, with a large blazing fire, full of smart well-dressed servants, which she had just left, she entered a cold damp place, more like a lumber-room than a hall, and did not see a soul, but Peter, the foot-boy, with lank greasy hair, in an old shabby frock, with a leather apron tied before him, who left off cleaning his knives to run and open the door.

“ Master he be out,” cried Peter, with a broad grin, “ but mistress be at home, and deadly glad she’ll be to see you, Miss.”

Mrs. Mourtray, after tenderly saluting her, resumed her occupation, which was, with the assistance of her maid, cutting out linen: a large quantity lay, piled up in heaps, which Emma surveyed with a sorrowful eye, well knowing that, in the

dull labour of making it, she should be employed many a long evening, and of late she had learned to detest all needle-work of the notable kind.

At length the maid was dismissed, and Mrs. Mourtray, having leisure to view her daughter, was alarmed at the alteration she perceived in her countenance.

“ Bless me !” cried she, “ why, surely, you are ill !”

Emma assured her of the contrary, and that she was only a little out of spirits at leaving Wilmington, where she had been so happy, and at parting with friends, whose goodness she never should forget.

“ Poor thing !” said Mrs. Mourtray, “ I am sure I am sorry for you, for you will pass a dull time here. I think the place is quite altered, for my part : I did not find the winters formerly so very disagreeable ;

agreeable ; but now, your father is always either out, attending to his farm, or engaged at chess with Du Masson : sometimes he even plays in the morning."

" I am glad he has found something," said Emma, " to amuse and occupy him."

" Yes ; but it is very dull for me ; however, now you are come, all will be well : I thought those great ladies never intended to send you back, but meant to keep you with them."

Emma formed half a wish that they had done this ; but she curbed it, as ungrateful to her mother. Mourtray, and her old preceptor, came in together just before dinner : she made an effort to look cheerful, for she doated on her father, who was the most kind and indulgent of parents. But after a little chat with him and Du Masson, on different subjects, she

relapsed into melancholy; trying to persuade herself, that this was solely caused by the loss of Lady Bell's company; and being, for a little while, alone with Mr. Mourtray, she could not refrain from lamenting her departure; "For you cannot imagine, papa," continued she, "how very agreeable she is, nor how fond she is of me."

"That she can be agreeable, I readily conceive," replied Mourtray, "but as to her fondness of you, that is not quite so clear."

"Good heaven, papa! how can you say so? If she does not love me, why should she pretend it, and why should she be so anxious to have me for ever at Wilmington?"

"One answer will serve for both questions;—because she wants you."

"How

"How is that possible?"

"Yes, she does; the society at Wilmington, except on particular days, is always the same; she has nobody of her own age to amuse her, for her sister is too grave; but you are young and lively."

"So then," said Emma, a little discontented, "my use is merely to amuse her?"

"Certainly; for if you were in town, she would consider you as nobody, because she can find many there, who would better answer her purpose."

"Indeed, papa, I am sure you are mistaken; Lady Bell is always wishing I could be in town when she is there."

"Ay; so she tells you; but fine ladies are sometimes insincere; and I

much suspect that Lady Bell would notice Emma Mourtray very little, unless she could make a figure equal to herself."

"There is little chance of that," said Emma, with a sigh, "or that ever I shall see London; but, I own, it would mortify me very much to find Lady Bell different there from what she is in the country; and excuse me, papa, for doubting that a person can be capricious, who is so remarkably good natured."

"My dear girl, when you are older, these sort of changes," said Mourtray, "will appear less wonderful, and scarcely affect you; for you will be prepared to meet them."

"Age, then, is still worse than I thought it," said Emma; "for to live in constant distrust would be more disagreeable to me than gray hairs, or wrinkles."

"Constant

“ Constant distrust can only be felt by bad minds ; but youthful ones should not form too warm attachments till they have discovered *more* than agreeable qualities, or even good nature ; for these *alone*, take my word for it, Emma, form a very insecure basis to friendship.”

The conversation here dropped ; and Emma, at her father’s request, took her seat at the piano forte, and soon played herself into better spirits.

The observations Mourtray had made on Lady Bell had not, indeed, been much in her favour ; but he had more in view than merely to guard his daughter from being duped by the semblance of friendship : having observed, not without uneasiness, her extreme susceptibility of first impressions, his chief object was to warn her against giving way to them too lightly ; but no caution of this kind

has much effect ; experience alone being able to rectify the errors of misjudging youth.

Mourtray did not again resume the subject : he was, in general, averse to every discourse that had the least resemblance to a lecture ; and having performed his duty, in admonishing his beloved Emma, he gave himself no further concern, but left matters to take their own course.

Mrs. Mourtray now strove, as much as possible, to find amusement, as well as employment, for Emma : with the former she affected to appear pleased, to gratify her mother, and performed the latter with her usual diligence ; but, with real satisfaction and apparent cheerfulness, she renewed her studies with Du Masson and her father, though still her thoughts often wandered to the Wilmington family,

mily, and she secretly sighed for the pleasures she supposed them enjoying.

No wonder, then, that the gloomy months of a very severe winter appeared to her more insupportable than ever: formerly, not being of an age to mix in the world, of which she knew nothing, her seclusion from it had not struck her as a hardship; but now she recollected, that Lady Bell was only a few months older than herself, and she felt that the only obstacle which prevented her appearing in the same brilliant circles as did her friend, and having her share of admiration, was the narrow fortune of her father.

Insensibly, and without being thoroughly conscious to what extent, she had imbibed, at Wilmington, notions of grandeur and ambition, which never would have entered her head had she not lived so much with persons of the most

worldly cast: mixed with these was a little vanity, originally the only weed that had sprung up in a mind, in which bloomed a thousand native virtues; and this baneful plant, though crushed, as much as possible, by her father, had too often been fostered by her fond, but weak mother: lately, too, it had gained strength by the compliments she had received from almost all the men she had seen at the balls, where her beauty far surpassed that of all others present.

Indeed, nothing more lovely could be imagined than was her countenance, nor any thing more perfect than her form: her features, without being strictly regular, were beautifully turned; her large dark eyes were full of spirit and sweetness, and her figure was so justly and elegantly proportioned, that she seemed fit to serve as the model of one of the Graces. The colour of her eyes and hair, with the circumstance of her name according

according so well with Prior's Emma, induced her father often to call her his nut-brown maid; but her skin, though brown, was clear, and animated with the purest red.

CHAP. V.

THE excessive inclemency of the weather, added to the roads rendered impassable by heavy falls of snow, debarred the Mourtray family from even the slight intercourse they had, in general, with their neighbours. Nothing, therefore, interrupted the dull uniformity of their way of life: each day the morning domestic occupations were the same; the walk on the downs, when a favourable gleam of sunshine appeared, was repeated; the same party met at dinner, unfurnished with any new topics of conversation; and the only circumstance which exhilarated their spirits in the evening, was the arrival of the letters and newspapers, which an old infirm man in the village walked some miles each day to fetch: he generally arrived about six o'clock, and

and this hour was always expected with impatience.

One evening, about the end of February, a fresh fall of snow had prevented his making his usual dispatch: Mourtray, though of a phlegmatic disposition, seemed a little impatient at this delay; his wife fretted; and his daughter ran out every five minutes to ask if nothing was come; nothing, indeed, was expected, except the newspapers; but the value of these can only be known by people, who, like this family, have been confined in the country during a long dreary winter. Under such circumstances, the arrival of one of these precious sheets is an important event, and it is devoured with greedy eyes and ears.

But when the clock struck eight, Mourtray, almost hopeless of learning, by the usual channel of information, what was passing in the world, sought consolation

tion by sitting down to chess with Du Masson, whom he had detained at Downton during the last week; and he ordered Peter to step into the village, and enquire what was become of the letter-carrier.

While the chess players, absorbed in their game, kept a profound silence, Mrs. Mourtray, having now relieved herself, by wondering "how this could happen? what could possess old Andrew to stay so late?" and next, by conjectures on the sort of event that might have retarded the papers' departure from London, betook herself to some plain work.

She had been long enough engaged in this, to fall nearly asleep over it, and only kept her eyes open by frequent applications to her snuff-box; which, in all her little troubles, she viewed as the first of all comforts.

All this time Emma, considering this evening as more peculiarly under the influence of dulness than any other yet had been, quietly resigned herself to what she could not mend; and fetching her music-book, she began copying into it some opera-dances Lady Bell had lent her when she left Wilmington. Whilst her pen traced the notes, her fancy was tracing the paths of pleasure that, probably, her friend was treading, and contrasting the difference of their situations.

Not one syllable had been heard in the parlour for above an hour and a half, excepting *check*; when the stillness was suddenly broken, by Peter's voice pacifying the house-dog as he entered the hall.

This sound roused Mrs. Mourtray out of a slumber into which she had fallen: "Bless me!" cried she, starting up, "here's the post at last!"

To this exclamation her husband, who happened at that moment to be under no small anxiety for the fate of his *queen*, contented himself by answering with a nod.

But Emma, whose motions were like lightning, had already anticipated the entrance of Peter into the parlour, whom she had flown to meet in the hall, and now appeared with the much wished-for packet in her hand.

“Andrew is safe and well, papa,” cried she; “but the snow is so deep, the poor man could not find his way; and he would probably have remained on the downs all night, if Peter had not luckily found him, and brought him here with him.”

A second nod from Mr. Mourtray.

“Shall

“ Shall I go and order something warm to be given to the poor creature ?” asked Emma of her mother, no longer thinking of any thing but old Andrew ; “ for, indeed, he seems half frozen.”

“ Ring the bell ; but, first hold the paper to the fire, child ; and as I hope this game of chess is almost over, you will have time to read it to us before supper.”

“ Peter does not hear the bell, mamma : had I not better go myself ?”

“ Why in such a hurry ? Let me first just skim over the paper.”

While she was doing this, Emma flew to give directions that great care might be taken of Andrew ; and when she returned, she reminded her mother that there were two letters : “ they are both,” said she, “ for my father, and one of them
has

has a great black seal: what can that mean?"

"A black seal! oh, mercy! it certainly is some bad news about Henry. Do, for God's sake, Mr. Mourtray, let your game alone, and open your letters."

Again Mr. Mourtray nodded, but quite mechanically; he had saved his *queen* by the loss of a *bishop*; and meditating a capital stroke, he neither heard nor saw any thing but the board before him.

Mrs. Mourtray, quite out of patience, and full of anxiety about her son, exclaimed, "you are really enough to provoke a faint; if you won't open the letters, let me at least do it."

"Do, do; any thing, whatever you please, my dear."

In consequence of this permission the letter was hastily torn open. Mrs. Mourtray, eagerly glancing her eye over it—
 “I don’t believe,” said she, “it is about Henry; but it is such a crabbed hand, I can’t read half of it: do, Emma, come and assist me.”

The ladies now tried to construe this letter. Emma made out these few words; “he has bequeathed to you consisting of to the amount of thirty thousand pounds”

“Good God! am I awake, or do I dream?” exclaimed the mother, snatching the letter from her hand; “surely you mistake, child: no, positively here are the very words!”

“Papa! O papa! such news—such joyful news!”

“Now

"Now do, pray, mind your papa!—There he sits immoveable!—I firmly believe an earthquake would not rouse him!—Mr. Mourtray; why, Mr. Mourtray, I say."

"Dear, dear papa! pray listen."

"Check mate, Sir!" cried Mourtray, triumphantly rising from the table, and pushing back his chair.

"*Affurement je ne m'y attendais pas!*" said Du Masson, shrugging up his shoulders.

"No, to be sure, how should you!" cried Mrs. Mourtray, thinking only of the legacy: "I believe nobody expected it."

"Well, my dear, what is it you have been saying?" quietly asked Mourtray, as he stirred the fire: "I suppose there is some

some good news, by Emma's capering about so."

"News, indeed!" answered Mrs. Mourtray, half sullenly; "God bless my heart! have not I been screaming to you this half hour, to tell you very great news; but you would not attend to me."

"Well, speak, I am all attention."

"Thirty thousand . . ."—"Trente mille des patriotes prises et tuées!" interrupting her, "*vraiment c'est une grande nouvelle!*" cried Du Masson, rubbing his hands."

"Lord bless me! why, *Monfieur*, the French are quite out of the question. I want, if possible, to make Mr. Mourtray understand, that he has got a legacy of thirty thousand pounds! and God knows what besides."

"In-

“ Indeed !” cried Mourtray, coolly, whilst, with an air of incredulity, he took the letter to read. “ Let him convince himself, my love,” said Mrs. Mourtray to Emma, who had clung hold of her father’s hand, eagerly assuring him of the truth of the legacy.

Du Masson, who understood English very imperfectly, could not, in the least, comprehend what had happened ; but sat with his mouth open, his eyes fixed, and twirling his thumbs, waiting an explanation.

Meanwhile, Mourtray convinced himself of the reality of his good fortune ; and as he finished the letter, he said, “ Upon my word, my dear, this is extraordinary news !”

“ Charming ! delightful !” exclaimed both ladies : “ and now, papa,” said Emma, pressing his hand between her’s,—
“ and

“and now, papa, we can go to London !”

“To be sure, my dear, or any where else,” said Mrs. Mourtray, answering for her husband ; “what may not be done with such a vast sum of money !”

“I hope,” replied Mourtray, “things really are as stated in this letter ; but we must not be too sanguine before we are absolutely in possession of this money.— But here is another letter to read.”

This contained nothing material. Whilst he was reading it, Mrs. Mourtray, after muttering something about damping people’s joy, suddenly recollected what transports her dear Henry would feel on this occasion ; and had almost a mind to send off an express instantly, to impart to him the glad tidings. Emma was explaining them to Du Masson, who, with his pencil, on a corner of
the

the neglected newspaper, was reducing the thirty thousand pounds into French livres; which operation being done, he exclaimed, lifting up his hands and eyes, "*Ah ! quelle somme ! quelle fortune immense !*"—"It is, indeed," echoed Emma, "an immense sum;" who, never having possessed more than a few shillings in her purse, considered this legacy as boundless.

Mutual congratulations now passed between the family; and Du Maffon, having made his, retired to his chamber; when Mourtray offered to the ladies to read the letter aloud, to which they gladly consented.

Lincoln's-Inn, Feb. 20, 17—.

"SIR,

"I have the honour to inform you of an event, in which you are highly interested. Your cousin, Mr. John Mourtray, after a short illness of only three days,

days, departed this life, at his lodgings in Great Marlborough-street, at a quarter before seven yesterday evening. He was but just returned from Antigua, rather in an infirm state of health; and it is imagined that a severe cold, caught on his journey from Plymouth, hastened his end.

“ My respectable friend and client, Simon Chowles, Esq., and the deceased, who had long been in habits of intimacy, desired my attendance yesterday morning, at the sick gentleman’s lodgings, to receive instructions for his will; which being made according to Mr. John Mourtray’s directions, was by him duly executed; Mr. Chowles and myself being appointed his executors. Herewith I send you a short sketch of the contents of the said will . . . ”

“ Hold,” cried Mrs. Mourtray, “ do not puzzle my brains with law terms,

but, in a few words, explain what is left to you."

"It may be as well," replied Mourtray with a smile.

"Ten thousand pounds, then, of this property, Mr. Sharp (the attorney) tells me, consist of stock in the three per cent. consols; the remaining twenty thousand are in the hands of Mr. Chowles..."

"And who is this Mr. Chowles?" asked Mrs. Mourtray.

"A considerable merchant, as I am informed, in the city. Moreover, my cousin bequeaths me his whole property in Antigua, which the attorney says produces, on an average, about two thousand pounds a year..."

"Two thousand a year!" exclaimed Mrs. Mourtray: "we shall be rolling in wealth!"

"Not

"Not so fast," said he: "this estate was not in Mr. John Mourtray's possession at the time of his death; a Mr. Edwards, it seems, to whom he had let it, forcibly detained it; pretending a claim to the estate in right of his wife, whose father, he asserted, had not the power of selling it to Mr. John Mourtray. My cousin then commenced a suit at law with him, which the attorney says he was in a fair way of carrying; but his declining health not suffering him to wait the issue, he came to England to try change of climate; and Sharp says, he has left him all the papers relative to this affair, clearly proving his title to the estate, of which he has no doubt speedily of putting me into possession, without any considerable expense."

"God grant it!" cried Mrs. Mourtray: "but I prefer the money to the estate; for my part I love certainties. Is there nothing else in the letter?"

“ It concludes thus,” answered Mourtray.

“ All these matters shall hereafter be fully explained by Mr. Chowles and myself; and it is highly expedient that you come to town as soon as you can make it convenient to yourself.

“ I proposed, before your relation’s demise, to send for you; but he said it was too late; and that, having lived abroad so long, he had no recollection of your person; although bearing his name, and being of his blood, he had always intended making you his heir.

“ I am, Sir, with due respect,

Your most obedient servant,

TIM. SHARP.”

“ *Lionel Mourtray, Esq.*”

“ Poor man!” cried Mourtray with a sigh, folding up the letter, “ poor man! it is melancholy, after having spent half
his

his life out of his native country, that he should only return home to die!—I wish I had seen him; perhaps, with care, he might have been saved.”

“To be sure it is melancholy for him,” observed Mrs. Mourtray, with looks that belied her words—“very melancholy; but, after all, since he was to die, it little signifies where; and I cannot see why you should wish a sickly person had lived, whom you did not know; when, by his decease, you will be able so opportunely to provide for your children, just coming into life.”

Mourtray made no reply; he seemed buried in thought. “I hope,” continued his wife, “that you are planning our journey to town.”

“All in good time, my dear.”

“Remember, you are desired to go immediately.”

“I intend it: for I shall be desirous, after learning all the particulars of my poor cousin's affairs, and taking proper counsel, of maturely considering, whether or not, I shall take the necessary measures for the recovery of the estate: after which I shall return home, and see what can be done to make this house comfortable.”

“You had much better let this old house alone,” said Mrs. Mourtray, “and immediately get us a good one in town.”

“Do, dear papa!” cried Emma: “I hope you will carry us thither.”

Mourtray, smiling, promised he would; and, at his wife's repeated entreaties, he consented to depart for London the next morning;

morning, where it was agreed he should hire a ready-furnished house for three months; and, as soon as this was done, that his family should join him. The intended alterations at Downton, upon reflection, he postponed till he had consulted some able architect.

Emma, without dwelling much on remote and uncertain contingencies, was satisfied that the thirty thousand pounds would make her parents rich: this wealth, therefore, would enable them to indulge her in all those objects she most wished.

While they had been making their arrangements, after emptying the contents of her slender purse into old Andrew's hand, she ran to Du Maffon's little study, where she found him, not, as she expected, elated with joy, but grave and thoughtful.

“What means this?” cried she.
 “Surely you did not understand what I told you!”

He assured her he had perfectly understood her; but that, though he rejoiced in the good fortune of his respectable friends, he could not help apprehending that it might deprive him of the pleasure of their society.

“Let not that grieve you; but cheer up, *Monsieur*. What is wealth good for, but to give us the means of gladdening the hearts of others as well as our own? And you may be certain, when my father goes away, he will take care to place you in a comfortable situation.”

Du Maffon bowed:—“*Mais pourquoi partir, Mademoiselle? Ou pourriez vous etre mieux qu'ici? Le chateau est un peu antique, mais —*.”

“Oh!

“ Oh ! Heaven ! ” cried Emma, “ why you would not wish me to be buried in this dull place all my life ? Go I must, and go I shall : I long to see London, to see Lady Bell, and a thousand other things.”

Du Masson, shrugging his shoulders, hinted the dangers of worldly pleasures ; reverting to the misfortunes of his country, which he chiefly attributed to the luxury and dissipation of the Parisians before the revolution.

But Emma was not in a humour to listen to a sermon ; and, smiling, said she would attend to him another time. She then desired him to put on a merry face, and come to supper ; assuring him, she would not let her father depart without giving him cause to be as gay as herself.

The old man's countenance now brightened, for he knew the excellence

of her heart, and that he might rely upon her promise. Misfortunes and extreme penury had somewhat contracted his mind, and made him feel a good deal more solicitous about his own interest than that of others; nevertheless, as far as was in his nature, he rejoiced at the prosperity of his benefactors, and took his share in the hilarity of the evening.

Mrs. Mourtray and Emma, of course, were in the highest spirits; both enjoying the idea of surprizing Henry Mourtray with the delightful tidings of their unexpected good fortune: the former wrote him a line that evening, to be ready for the post next day. Emma wished she might write to Lady Bell, but consoled herself for the prohibition, by the thought that she would be more agreeably surprized to hear the news from her own mouth.

Whilst,

Whilst, till a very late hour, the ladies amused themselves with gay projects for the future, Mr. Mourtray occasionally listened to them with less *sang froid* than usual; and sometimes revolved in his mind all his favourite schemes of restoring to the seat of his ancestors some degree of beauty and neatness.

CHAP. VI.

FAITHFUL to her word, Emma rose early the following morning, to mention to her father the promises of assistance she had ventured, in his name, to give Du Masson. He embraced her tenderly, and leaving a trifle in her hands, by way of earnest, assured her he would send from town something better worth the old man's acceptance. He was just on the point of setting out on his journey, when Mrs. Mourtray appeared, again to remind him of what she had been earnestly recommending, which was the absolute necessity of procuring a handsome carriage, to be ready against her arrival in town.

With this injunction he departed; and she and her daughter, willing to profit by a fine day, proceeded, after breakfast,

to

to take a walk on the downs. Their opening views so engrossed their thoughts, that they had wandered a considerable way from home before they discovered it; yet the snow on the ground made it rather bad walking.

At length weariness obliged them to return, and they were within a hundred yards of the paddock gate, when they saw a gentleman briskly trotting towards them, whose figure had very much the air of Sydney's.

"Bless me!" cried Mrs. Mourtray, "is not that Mr. Sydney, the ugly man I saw at the ball: what can bring him here?"

Emma blushed, for more than one reason; and, if she had any suspicion of the cause of his appearance, her mother's expression would alone have prevented her from avowing it.

Mrs.

Mrs. Mourtray, however, according to her usual custom, began discussing her own conjectures, all quite different from those of her daughter; and, before she had settled this point, Sydney dismounted, and joined them.

After the usual compliments, Mrs. Mourtray eagerly enquired, what brought him to that part of the country; his own habitation being at a great distance from it.

He answered, not without some degree of confusion, that he had business at —, and could not pass so near Downton, without stopping to enquire after the health of a family, for whom he had so great a respect: encouraged to take this liberty, by having the honour of some acquaintance with Miss Mourtray.

To this Mrs. Mourtray slightly courted; and then, apologizing that she could

could not desire him to make any stay, her husband being absent, she just coolly asked, whether he would partake of their family dinner; observing, however, that it was very dangerous riding over the downs at night, the hollow ways being filled with snow.

Sydney protested he would willingly defy this danger, or indeed any other, to enjoy the pleasure of passing a few hours at Downton, looking at Emma, with eager and sparkling eyes, who, with her wonted frankness and good humour, said she was delighted to see him.

“Delighted!” repeated Mrs. Mourtray to herself, contracting her brow—
 “delighted!—how can the girl say so?”
 Emma instantly perceiving, by her mother’s face, that she had said too much, became more reserved in her expressions.

The dinner passed in conversing on general topics of weather, news, and country occurrences, with occasional mysterious hints, dropped by Mrs. Mourtray, of the change in her fortune; to which Sydney listened with an air of interest, repressing, however, his curiosity to learn more than she chose to communicate; yet, when she mentioned her intention of soon removing to town, his heart bounded with delight, and he could not refrain from exclaiming—"Good God! how glad I am!—for there I may have frequent opportunities of seeing you ladies."

"You think, then, of going to town to make some stay?" asked Mrs. Mourtray, coldly.

"O, yes; and I hope, Madam, you will allow me the honour of calling upon you sometimes."

She

She bowed, and said, hesitatingly,
 “ We shall be a good deal engaged, Sir,
 and probably little at home, as our stay
 in town will be but short.”

“ But sometimes, Madam, I may have
 the good fortune to find you.”

“ Perhaps,”^d was all her reply.

Although Sydney had no further view
 in this visit than merely to have a pleasure,
 which it appeared to him an age since
 he had been deprived of, that of seeing
 Emma, he could not help, when he
 thought himself unobserved, fixing his
 eyes upon her with an expression of ten-
 derness, which did not pass unnoticed by
 Mrs. Mourtray, who, repeatedly looking
 at her watch, observed how shocking the
 snow had made the roads.

Sydney, who, in compliance with his
 inclinations, had as long as possible dis-
 regarded

regarded these hints, felt at length that decorum constrained him to depart ; he, therefore, rang the bell, and desired his horse might be brought to the door.— The horse not arriving immediately, he sought to reconcile her to the delay, by relating several anecdotes and accounts of things and places he had seen on the continent, where he had lived a great deal.

But Mrs. Mourtray, who had as great a dislike to a plain face as Lady Wilmington had predilection for a handsome one, determined not to be amused ; and observing that he still lingered, though his horse had been announced as ready, she said, rising from her seat, “ Indeed, Sir, it is getting extremely dark ; I mean, it will get very dark ; and only a few nights ago, a poor man of this village lost his way, and was near perishing. I recommend to you, therefore, not to lose a moment,

moment, as I should be very sorry, if you were to meet with an accident."

"To relieve you, Madam, from this apprehension," said Sydney, smiling, "I will go this instant;" and, bowing to her and Emma, he added, "May I hope, Miss Mourtray, that your good wishes will attend me in this perilous expedition? Nothing less can arm me with courage to undertake it."

Emma gaily assured him, that, if these could be of any use, he might depend upon having them; and Sydney then departed.

"Pray," said Mrs. Mourtray, as soon as he was gone, "who is this young man? What is his situation?"

"I know little more, Madam," replied Emma, "than that he is heir to his mother's,

ther's (Lady Clannarmon,) title and estate, who does not, however, seem very kind to him, for she suffers him to reside in a farm house, and lets the family seat."

"Umph! It is a pity he is so ugly, for I see clearly he is smitten with you."

"With me, Mamma! He has never hinted any thing of the kind, I assure you."

"That may be; but I hope, if ever he should say any thing of the kind, that you will give him no encouragement; for with your person, and the fortune you may now expect, you may do better."

"I have not the least partiality for Mr. Sydney," said Emma, "though I must acknowledge, that I believe him to be a very worthy man; and I am certain that he is very sensible, agreeable, and dances to perfection."

"Very

“ Very likely ; but you did wrong to say you were delighted to see him : young persons ought not to use such strong expressions, when speaking to men.”

Emma blushed. “ I am sure I did this very innocently,” said she ; “ though I certainly did feel pleased to see him, but no more than I should to see any body else of my acquaintance.”

Whilst this conversation was passing, Sydney, more enamoured than ever, was hastening to the place of his destination ; his mind occupied with the delightful idea, that he should often see Emma in town ; till this was damped by the just apprehension, that so much beauty could not appear in the world without attracting a multitude of rivals ; one of whom, better gifted by nature and fortune than himself, might touch that heart he valued so highly. He felt, too, with a severe pang, that if, by a miracle, this should
not

not happen, Emma might not like to ally herself to his mother, whose failings he in secret deplored.

Lady Clannarmon was the only child of the last Baron of that name. In her youth she had possessed great beauty and vivacity, with violent passions, which she never attempted to controul. Lord Clannarmon for many years lived abroad in a public character, and Sydney's father attended him as private secretary: though perfectly a gentleman, he was wholly destitute of fortune; his appointment, therefore, to this office he considered as truly fortunate, especially as his Lordship treated him with infinite kindness and attention. One twelvemonth Mr. Sydney had passed content and happy, punctually performing the duties of his situation, and daily rising in Lord Clannarmon's favour; but, unfortunately, he had made equal progress in that of Miss Clannarmon.

His

His handsome person and agreeable manners had made an impression on her heart, which, so far from repressing, she took every opportunity of discovering to him. But, sensible of the inferiority of his situation to her's, and gratefully attached to her father, he feigned not to observe what secretly flattered his vanity. Two years younger, however, than Miss Clannarmon; living constantly under the same roof with a beautiful girl, who scrupled not to make advances to him; possessing himself no firmness of mind, insensibly he forgot his obligations to the father, to devote himself wholly to the daughter.

The consequences alarmed them both, but Sydney far the most; for Miss Clannarmon, bold and fertile in contrivance, soon planned a scheme that she thought would extricate her from her present dilemma.

She

She had an aunt in England, who had repeatedly requested her to spend some time with her, which she had invariably declined, till she saw herself threatened with shame and disgrace; but this invitation she now resolved to accept, easily obtaining her father's approbation: after which, having put Mrs. Barnsley (her maid) into her confidence, she hastened to England, leaving secret directions with her lover, to secure her from detection, by carefully preventing any letters from her father reaching her aunt's house: instead of which, they were to be sent to her, in London; where, under a feigned name, she had hired private lodgings to wait her confinement, writing constantly to Lord Clannarmon, and dating her letters from his sister's house. Although she had no apprehensions that her father would discover the imposition, yet, to guard against accidents, Mr. Sydney had injunctions to suffer no letter to pass into his Lordship's hands, till he had examined it.

it. Her scheme succeeded perfectly: in six weeks after her arrival in London, she gave birth to a son, whom she had christened Lewis Fitzaubert; and a fortnight afterwards she made her promised visit to her aunt, pretending she was just arrived from the continent, and recently recovered from a very dangerous illness: her pale face confirming her assertion, it was implicitly believed.

Her child, by her directions, was placed in a village, about fifteen miles from town, under the care of a nurse, who was paid by Mrs. Barnsley (his supposed mother) for his maintenance, one year in advance.

Hitherto Lord Clannarmon had not entertained the slightest suspicion of his daughter's conduct; when, one day, his secretary (whose vigilance had relaxed since he believed the danger over) being absent, the letters from England, no longer

impeded in their progress, came straight into his own hands. Seeing his daughter's seal, without hesitation he opened a letter, intended for Sydney, written in such terms as could leave him no doubt of her dishonour; and, in a postscript, she mentioned, that now she was with her aunt, it was not possible for her to see her infant; but that it was well.

To describe the paroxysm of rage of a father, extremely jealous of his honour, who thus found himself duped and disgraced by an only child, and betrayed by the person in whom he most confided—is impossible!—Indisposed before with the gout, the violence of his passion threw it into his stomach; and though, by medical assistance, it was not immediately fatal, he survived the shock but a very few days; long enough, however, for him to have time to disinherit his daughter of all he could leave from her; but he could not deprive her of his title,

title, and about five-and-twenty hundred a year.

Mr. Sydney had returned home, in the height of the confusion, just as Lord Clannarmon had sufficiently recovered his speech to shower down the most horrible imprecations on his head. Guilty, abashed, and wretched, he had recourse to flight, and remained in concealment till he heard of Lord Clannarmon's death. As soon as this intelligence reached him, he made such expedition in getting to England, that he arrived in time to be the first person to announce it to Miss Clannarmon; who, though a good deal shocked for an instant, soon felt more resentment than sorrow, when she learned, afterwards, that her father had punished her misconduct by leaving to a distant branch of the family four thousand pounds a year, that he could dispose of.

Her passion for her lover, which had acquired new force by absence, and the malignant joy she felt in braving her father's memory, induced her, without delay, to bestow her hand and fortune upon him.

The year following the new Baroness produced a son, whose birth was celebrated with the greatest rejoicings, whilst her first-born, Fitzaubert, condemned to obscurity, scarcely ever occupied a place in her remembrance.

His father, indeed, had often expressed a desire to see him, which Lady Clannarmon peremptorily refused: "Why should you see him?" she would say: "What good can it do the boy? You know he is well; why run the risk, by a foolish fancy, of exposing my reputation?"

Sydney, weak, dependant, and governed by his wife, ventured not to oppose her will.

will. The secret of Fitzaubert's birth was only known to his parents and Mrs. Barnsley ; Lady Clannarmon, therefore, flattered herself it would never be divulged. All tenderness for her unfortunate son had been extinguished in her breast from the instant of Julian Sydney's birth ; and insensibly her husband, doatingly fond of the child, who grew up under his eye, ceased to think of *him* whom he had never seen.

The poor neglected boy remained till he was eight years old with his nurse : about that time, Mrs. Barnsley (Lady Clannarmon's confidante) dying, she no longer apprehended detection ; consequently she placed him under the care of a clergyman, as a destitute orphan, whom she protected out of charity ; and having done this, she considered she had done *all* that was necessary, giving herself no further trouble than to pay annually a small sum for his maintenance.

Sydney heard of this arrangement, but, full of domestic chagrins occasioned by Lady Clannarmon's avarice and despotism, he dared not solicit for his son the kindness denied to himself. Julian, amiable and good, was his only comfort, and likewise beloved by his mother, as much as was consistent with her narrow, selfish disposition.

Every attention was paid to his education ; for Lady Clannarmon, who did not want for sense, said, it was requisite that talents and information should make amends, in him, for the want of personal endowments.

Fitzaubert had now attained the age of twenty, without being known to his father, and still in entire ignorance of his family ; when, one day, Mr. Sydney being on his road to London, and breakfasting at an inn at Bagshot, a waiter informed him that a young gentleman
below

below earnestly intreated to speak with him. Mr. Sydney desired he might be shewn in ; and presently a tall, handsome youth appeared, who, if he had not been announced by the name of Fitzaubert, he would have known to be his son, by his strong resemblance to Lady Clannarmon.

In the greatest perturbation, and yet desirous to retain his secret, he could scarcely stammer out an enquiry into the object of this visit.

Fitzaubert, however, without hesitation, said, that having by chance learned, from the people of the inn, that he was husband to Lady Clannarmon, whom he had been taught to consider as his guardian, he wished to enquire, wherefore she had ceased, for above a twelvemonth, to pay for his maintenance, to the great inconvenience of the clergyman who had educated him,—and also, what views she

had for his future establishment, being heartily tired of his present situation.

Sydney, at a loss what to answer, said he was ignorant of her intentions, but would not fail to represent all he wished to Lady Clannarmon ; when he was struck aghast by Fitzaubert's (after a moment's silence, his eyes fixed full upon him) asking—"Who was my father, Sir ? How came I under Lady Clannarmon's care ?" "Your father ! . . . your father ! . . . I really don't . . . I can't, just . . . but Lady Clannarmon was his friend."

"His friend ! and desert his son !— But tell me, Sir, have I no relation, no connection, who will acknowledge me ; or do I stand single and alone in the wide world ?"

Sydney, whose agitation increased every instant, not venturing to answer, he continued—"Perhaps you knew my father,

father, Sir ? Surely, if he were alive, I should not be thus forlorn !”

When Sydney, no longer able to contain his feelings, cried, extending his arms to embrace him—“ Your father lives—he now presses you to his heart !”

Fitzaubert fell in his arms, with infinite emotion, but presently struggling with it, he assumed his former stern air : “ You say, Sir, that you are my father,” cried he ; “ but whence comes it that, till this moment, I have never seen nor heard of you ? Was it in consequence of your desertion that Lady Clannarmon (excepting when she forgot me) provided for my maintenance ?”

“ You are rash in your judgments, and indiscreet in your questions,” said Sydney, much discomposed ; “ be satisfied that I own you for my son, and as
G 5 such

such will provide for you as well as I can."

"Pardon me, Sir," said the haughty youth, "for troubling you with questions that, I perceive, it is inconvenient for you to answer: to Lady Clannarmon, therefore, I shall apply, to know why, without any fault of mine, that I am conscious of, I have, during twenty years, been kept in ignorance that I had a father."

"Rash boy!" cried Sydney in an agony of terror—"Rash boy, beware! Half a word, a hint, may ruin you,—ruin us both for ever. Never, I charge you, let Lady Clannarmon know that you have seen me; and conceal from her, and all the world, what my weakness has extorted from me."

"If I am to be silent, if I am still to be considered in the world as fatherless,

less, at least, Sir, explain for what mysterious reason I am thus treated as an alien ! Excuse me, Sir ; I cannot repress the wish of knowing, at least, if I have a mother !”

“ For Heaven’s sake enquire no further ; persuade yourself you have no mother ; it is useless to mention a person whose name——.”

“ Is Lady Clannarmon !” exclaimed Fitzaubert, finishing the sentence :—“ yes, she is the unnatural mother who has deserted her unfortunate son, and who has made *you*, Sir, forget that you were a father.”

Improper as had been the whole of Fitzaubert’s language, and grating as it was to the ears of Sydney, he dared not resent it, because his conscience told him how culpably he had acted : but when he found his son in full possession of his

secret, he seemed as if petrified : at length he said, " How came you to know this ? How did you learn that Lady Clannarmon is your mother ? "

" From yourself ; your extreme agitation when I mentioned her : the improbability that she should have undertaken the care of *your* child, confirmed what I had before suspected. Certain ambiguous hints dropped by Mrs. Barnsley, when I saw her just before her death, which I had often since revolved in my mind without being able to explain — your behaviour this morning clearly elucidated."

As all further reserve became useless, and almost impossible, Sydney now undertook the irksome task of revealing to his son the whole truth, endeavouring to soften his haughty, stubborn spirit, by representing to him the exact state of his own situation, which depended entirely
on

on his wife ; promising, however, that he would employ a small sum, which he thought he might be able to procure, in the purchase of a commission for him in the army, upon condition that he would give him his word never to reveal the secret of his birth, or let his mother suspect he knew it, until he received his permission.

With much reluctance Fitzaubert gave the promise, appearing, at last, tolerably satisfied with what he had obtained from his father ; who, on his departure, flattered him with the hopes of seeing him again shortly ; and Fitzaubert, who was actually on his journey to see Lady Clannarmon when he accidentally met Mr. Sydney, now returned to his former abode.

To raise the money, and negotiate the affair of the commission, now fully occupied Mr. Sydney ; but before any thing

thing was concluded, he fell dangerously ill in London, whither Julian Sydney, without Lady Clannarmon, had accompanied him ; and, finding his end approach, in broken accents he recommended Fitzaubert to his brother, acknowledging him as his son, and referring him to a paper he had written, at the beginning of his illness, for those particulars concerning him that he had neither courage nor strength to relate.

As soon as Julian Sydney had recovered the first shock of his father's death, and paid the necessary attentions to his mother, who had arrived just in time to see her husband expire, he hastened, after perusing with horror the disgraceful private history of his family, to seek his brother, whom he had already apprized of his father's decease.

Full of warmth of heart and benevolence, Sydney advanced with open arms

to

to receive a brother he had never seen ; but Fitzaubert, shrinking from his embrace, said, looking stedfastly at him—
 “ At length, then, I have the honour of seeing Mr. Sydney ! ”—dwelling with emphasis on the name.

“ Say pleasure, rather than honour, my dear brother,” cried Sydney, “ for I feel much in seeing you.”

“ You are so good, then, to acknowledge me as a brother ! ”

“ I am happy to call you so, and hope by my conduct to gain your affection.”

“ We are strangers to each other ! ” said Fitzaubert, coldly.

“ I regret we should so long have been so. Alas ! we have both much to regret !—our poor father——.”

“ You

"*You* may have cause," cried Fitzau-
bert, hastily, with his eyes flashing fire—
"*you*, Mr. Sydney, may have cause to
lament a father, and to love a mother ;
but as for me, rejected by the latter,
and deceived by false promises by the
former.—"

"Say not so," cried Sydney, inter-
rupting him ; "death alone prevented my
poor father from completing what he
had actually begun for your advantage :
now it shall be my affair to bring it to a
conclusion."

"You promise readily ; but where are
your means for the performance?"

"Perhaps I may obtain them from my
mother ; if not, whatever I have, I will
share with you."

"Mention not your mother ; but for
her, I should not be reduced to the
humi-

humiliating necessity of receiving favours from my younger brother, the future Lord Clannarmon !”

A sentiment of indignation arose in Sydney's breast, which he could scarcely subdue ; but, recollecting that Fitzaubert felt himself injured and neglected, he said, though not without emotion, “ If ever you find me disposed to arrogate to myself any superiority for possessing what I acquire by no desert of my own, you will do right to treat me with asperity ; but whilst you find me inclined to soften, as far as is in my power, those hardships which I did not inflict, but which I sincerely lament, treat me, I conjure you, as a brother.”

“ Will you instantly lend me a hundred pounds ?” asked Fitzaubert, abruptly.

“ Certainly,” answered Sydney, without hesitation, though his small allowance

ance rendered the loan thus suddenly required extremely inconvenient.

“ Well, I believe,” said Fitzaubert, wringing his hands, “ you will force me, in despite of myself, to love you.”

Sydney, delighted at the termination of a dialogue that began so unpleasantly, immediately gave his brother a draft for the money, and, after spending the day with him, hastened to his mother, resolving to try, without giving her reason to suppose he knew how nearly she was interested, whether he could not soften her in behalf of her own and first-born child.

He therefore informed her, with all possible delicacy, that his father had revealed to him that he had a brother, a fine, handsome young man, whom he intended (had he lived) to have placed in the army ; but that, by their late
misfor-

misfortune, his brother had been left wholly destitute.

Lady Clannarmon, whose countenance had undergone various alterations during the time he was speaking, finding he hesitated to proceed, said, in a voice of stifled anger, "And, pray, for what purpose do you mention this person to me?"

"I thought, Madam—I hoped—to excite your pity and generosity, to accomplish my father's intentions."

"I know not *who* has excited you," said Lady Clannarmon, haughtily, "to presume to trouble me on such a subject: but let me recommend to you, never to repeat it!"

"I should be extremely concerned, Madam, to offend you; yet, to plead for an unfortunate brother . . ."

"Brother!"

“ Brother !” exclaimed Lady Clannarmon, “ brother, indeed !—Mind, I forbid your calling Fitzaubert brother. The bounty he has hitherto owed to my charity shall instantly be withdrawn, if . . . ”

“ It has already been withdrawn. For God’s sake, Madam, consider his deserted, wretched situation.”

“ Get out of my sight—depart, this instant !”—cried Lady Clannarmon, with ungovernable fury :—“ Depart, I say,—lest I should forget I am *your* mother.”

Sydney, finding her thus violent, obeyed, but generously made a second attempt to soften her hard heart, which unnaturally detested her eldest son, because he was a living proof of her own dishonour. This being as unsuccessful as the first, he went to town, determined to make every exertion to serve his brother ;

brother ; and, after incredible difficulties (increased by his wanting two years of being of age), and, at a very heavy expence, he contrived to raise, on the estate he must inherit after his mother's death, a sum sufficient to procure an ensign's commission for Fitzaubert ; exhausting the chief part of his annual allowance to pay his debts, and furnish him so as to appear like a gentleman.

But neither Sydney's remonstrances, nor entreaties, nor yet his kindness, had sufficient weight with Fitzaubert, to prevent his openly declaiming against his mother ; considering his promise to his father as cancelled, by his having failed in his part of the agreement, and by her subsequent obduracy towards him.

Lady Clannarmon, finding the story she had been at so much pains to conceal likely to become public, thought it prudent to retire abroad, and fixed on
Florence

Florence as the place of her residence : but, to remove Sydney at a distance from his brother, she sent him to make the tour of Europe, which engaged him for two years ; after which, being now of age, she suffered him to return to England, where he had been about half a year at the time he came to the fête at Wilmington, and had not seen Fitzaubert since his return, as he was absent with the regiment to which he belonged, in Ireland.

Nevertheless, he never failed to hear from him whenever he experienced any pecuniary wants, which was not unfrequently the case, as Fitzaubert had little delicacy, and a disposition prone to extravagance.

Sydney's liberality to his brother, and Lady Clannarmon's illiberality towards himself, had obliged him to live with much privacy and œconomy ; but, just before

before his visit to Downton, she had unexpectedly sent him an order on her banker for a sum sufficient to enable him to pass some time in town, whither she desired he would immediately remove.

CHAP. VII.

A WEEK had now elapsed since Mourtray's departure: one letter only had been received from him, written in great haste, merely to say his relation's will had been proved, and that he found the legacy would be paid immediately; but that the rest of the affairs were rather in a more complicated state than he had been given to understand by Sharp's first account: though the lawyers he had consulted were of opinion that his title to the Antigua estate was good. In a postscript, he added, that he had bespoken a carriage; but had not yet found a house that would suit him.

The ladies, therefore, were obliged to restrain their impatience till further intelligence arrived: but with every returning post it broke out anew; and, at last,
Mrs.

Mrs. Mourtray protested, if her husband did not get a house immediately, she would go to town and get one herself.

But scarcely had she uttered these words, when the joyful news came that he had hired a ready-furnished house in Upper Wimpole Street, which was quite prepared for the reception of his family: and, at the same time, he sent a few lines to Du Masson, with a bank-note inclosed, which so enraptured the old man, that he was quite reconciled to his pupil's departure from the country, and cried—
"Partez donc, Mademoiselle, partez; et moi aussi je partirai, graces à Monsieur votre pere;" declaring his intention of joining some of his countrymen in the isle of Jersey.

Mrs. Mourtray was perfectly indifferent whither he went, though she wished him well; having no leisure, at that time, to think of any thing excepting her journey.

ney. But Emma really took leave of him with regret. She, likewise, made her farewell visits to the poor of the village, by whom she was adored; for, small as her means had hitherto been, she had done all in her power to serve them: when she could not give them money, though not fond of work, she made linen for them; and she had persuaded her mother to keep a little store of simple medicines for the sick, of which she had the distribution. Often she employed herself in instructing the children in reading and writing; and in those moral and religious principles instilled into her by her father.

As the preparations for the removal of the family had been so long made, they arrived in town in two days after the receipt of Mr. Mourtray's letter. The sight of a great city was not quite a novelty to Emma, for her mother had once taken her for a week to Bath, whilst the Wil-

mington

Wilmington family were in Ireland; but still she was delighted and surprised with the first *coup d'œil* of London.

The situation of her new house by no means pleased Mrs. Mourtray: she complained it was almost as quiet as Down-ton; and would have preferred Bond Street, Piccadilly, or Pall Mall, to be convinced, she said, by the bustle, that, at last, she really was in London.

Emma had no sooner embraced her father, than her first inquiry was, whether Wimpole Street was near Grosvenor Square, where the Wilmingtons lived; and she was chagrined to learn that the distance was considerable. However, not to lose a moment, she dispatched a note instantly to Lady Bell, to tell her she was in town, and had some agreeable intelligence to communicate; having no doubt but that she would fly to her immediately. But the chairman, whom she had charged

to make the greatest haste back, after staying a good while, returned, saying, that he had delivered the note, and been told it required no answer.

A little disconcerted, but willing to excuse her friend, she supposed the family might be at dinner when her note was delivered; recollecting that Lord Wilmington dined very late in town.—Possibly Lady Bell might not be able to come till the next morning; but *then* she was sure of seeing her.

In this, however, she was mistaken; for the morning passed, and no news came from Grosvenor Square! Emma, and Mrs. Mourtray also, was now convinced that there had been some blunder in the delivery of the note; and, therefore, without standing on further ceremony, so absurd amongst friends, the former resolved, in the evening, to go thither herself: but, just as she was sitting down to dinner,

dinner, she received a crumpled scrap of paper, with these words :

“ DEAR EMMA,

“ What can have brought you to town? God knows when I can see you, for I am engaged over head and ears! I will, however, contrive (if mamma will let me) to call upon you some morning when I have leisure. Ever your's,

ISABELLA FONTELIEU.”

This cold laconic note, that, at once, let down all Emma's hopes of surprising her friend agreeably, was such a grievous disappointment to her, that she could scarcely refrain from tears; but, ashamed to shew such weakness, she handed it to her mother, and left the room.—“ Not to express the least satisfaction at my arrival, after all her warm professions of friendship!” said she to herself. “ Ah! my father, I fear, judged more truly of Lady Bell than myself.”

Mrs. Mourtray soon called her daughter back, and, without any reserve, gave it as her opinion, that Lady Bell had behaved so very ill, she should think no more about her: but Emma, although angry, no sooner heard her condemned, than she forgot her displeasure, to justify her; alledging, in her defence, that she was sure she had not acted according to her own feelings, but had been guided by others less partial to her.

Mrs. Mourtray, not venturing to rely on her own judgment in so important an article as that of dress, had made little addition to her own and daughter's wardrobe; waiting till she had seen Lady Wilmington and the young ladies, who must, of course, be in the height of the fashion: but, now, having little hopes of improving her taste in consequence of such models, she resolved to wait no longer; and, the next morning, she hurried Emma from

from shop to shop, till both were half dead with fatigue.

The whole family, the day following, were invited to dine with Mr. Chowles, who had seen Mr. Mourtray often since he came to town ; and had waited upon the ladies the morning after their arrival.

Mr. Chowles, though before unknown to Mourtray, being executor to his late cousin, had necessarily much business to transact with him. The twenty thousand pounds in his hands, he had, at first, offered to pay immediately ; but, afterwards, having hinted that it would be a great convenience to him in his mercantile concerns to be suffered to retain this money some time longer, Mourtray, easy and obliging, though he could have disposed of it much more advantageously, consented to leave it with him.

Chowles was a capital West-Indian merchant, whose commercial dealings were very extensive, and whose credit was supposed to be established on the firmest basis. He did not, however, reside at his counting-house in the city, but had a large house in Hanover Square.

Thither the Mourtrays were conveyed, at five o'clock, on the day appointed: he himself met them at the head of the stairs, and introduced them into the drawing-room, where they found a gentleman and lady, whom he presented to them as his relations; adding, in an audible whisper—"The honourable Mr. and Mrs. Prouting."

The gentleman was a little, thin, squeezed figure, with a pale peaked face, and a pink nose; apparently the most insignificant of beings, who seemed to have nothing to do in this world but to
echo

echo the words of his wife ; a lady who shewed, on all occasions, a most decided will of her own.

She was a very plain woman, much marked with the small-pox, with a very ordinary figure : probably, however, she did not think so, for she was dressed to the extremity of the fashion ; in a tunic of violet-coloured velvet, with yellow satin sleeves, so short, as to leave her red elbows bare : her own sandy hair was concealed under a black Brutus wig, in the front of which she wore a large diamond star, to fasten on it two high yellow and green feathers.

It would be very unjust not to add to these portraits, that of the master of the house, who was a very remarkable personage in all places.

Mr. Chowles was between forty and fifty ; he had passed the younger part of

his life in the West-Indies, where his complexion acquired a deep shade of a tawny red; and, in proportion as he gained wealth, he had gained flesh; which, unfortunately, did not comport with his height, being rather short. Large staring eyes seemed starting out of his shining forehead; and his long yellow teeth seemed to have the same propensity to push themselves into notice.

Such was Chowles in person; who now, to amuse his guests, carried them through a suite of rooms he had just furnished; willing to impress them with a proper idea of his taste and magnificence.

But Emma, who had been so much at Wilmington, had learned to distinguish between tawdry ill chosen ornaments and elegant simplicity; therefore, to Mr. Chowles's observation, that every thing in his house was rich and *tastey*, she had
nothing

nothing to reply; though her mother perfectly concurred with him in this opinion.

The dinner was profuse, and an immense quantity of plate was exhibited; but the servants were vulgar and awkward: Chowles, from time to time, looking, with a broad grin, at his country guests, to observe the impression his sumptuous table made on people so long accustomed to frugal œconomy.

“ You see, Miss,” said he to Emma at the dessert (for he paid her marked attention)—“ you see that we city folks can have fine, ay, and good things too, as well as the quality. No offence, I hope, cousin (bowing to Mrs. Prouting): but, though I hate to brag, I must say I should like to see the man, be he who he may, who understands better than myself them sort of things!”

"O! my dear Sir," cried Mrs. Prouting, "all the world does justice to your taste; your cook's merits, too, are in high estimation; and it was but yesterday evening that I heard a great personage say, that he believed you had determined to monopolize all the fine things in London; for nobody could get a valuable picture, a ring, or even a snuff-box, if once you heard of it."

"Ha! ha! and a very good reason for that. Why, all your great people are as poor as rats; none of them bleed freely: now, for my part, when once I like a thing (looking, with a sly wink, at Emma), have it I will; so there's an end of it."

"Very right, perfectly right," said the complaisant Mrs. Prouting.

"Who can so well afford to please himself?" added her husband.

"As

“As to that,—though far be it from me to brag, for I hate ostentation,” said Chowles, swelling with importance—“I will count guineas with any man as long as he chooses; and this is pretty well known at t’other end of the town.”

While Chowles was thus engaged in boasting, Mrs. Prouting, in a low voice, said to Emma—“People in a certain line of life pass so great a part of it, before they are accustomed to have any thing tolerable about them, that when, at last, they have, it is such a novelty, they can’t help boring one to death about it; though it would be much wiser if they held their tongues, and did not remind one that they had once no right to expect it. Poor Mr. Chowles, though the best man in the world, has this failing.”

Emma, astonished at this speech, from a person who, she understood, was related to their host, and who, but a few minutes

minutes before, had dosed him with flattery, only said, in reply, that Mr. Chowles seemed to have a good-natured pleasure in doing as much as he could to gratify others.

“ No, ma'am,” answered Mrs. Prouting : “ you are quite out there ; he sports his finery only to gratify himself.”

All this while Mrs. Mourtray was enjoying herself extremely. Here she found herself perfectly at her ease : not confounded in a crowd, as she had often been at Wilmington ; not awed into silence by the proud reserve of the entertainers ; but considered now as one of the chief objects of attention.

During dinner, so many things had been recommended to her to taste, so many objects to admire, she had so much to say and to hear, that it is doubtful which was the most delighted, she or

Chowles:

Chowles ; for it was a high gratification to his vanity and ostentation to entertain a guest of her description.

But one circumstance discomposed her a little ; this was, that her husband was in one of his silent moods, surveying, with the most perfect indifference, every thing around him. In vain she tried, by her frequent appeals, to rouse him into admiration ; she could not get him to say three words, till the conversation turned on politics.

Then, indeed, finding Chowles betrayed some predilection towards the revolutionary principles of France, merely because he weakly imagined, if established in this country, his superiors, whom he envied and detested, would be brought down to his own level ; Mourtray thought it necessary openly to avow, not only his steady attachment to the British constitution, but also his rooted aversion to democratic

eratic principles ; and, as none of the ladies had any taste for political discussions, Mrs. Prouting proposed to withdraw.

After the gentlemen had joined the female party, the evening passed rather more disagreeably than the dinner had done, in Emma's opinion ; for Chowles, who felt for her a sensation not sufficiently refined to be called admiration, demonstrated it by such offensive familiarity, that she shrunk from him in disgust. He seemed to suppose, that, as he could afford to purchase most things he coveted, she might be classed in this number ; and he attributed her reserve, partly to her not properly understanding the value of his attentions, and partly to her rustic education.

With her mother's behaviour, who was evidently dazzled by his magnificence, he was extremely satisfied ; and he paid such court

court to her, that he entirely won her good opinion.

Fortunately for Emma, her father did not relish the party better than she did; and, to her no small relief, at a tolerably early hour he hinted to his wife his wish of retiring: to this she yielded with infinite reluctance; for, after having lived so long in retirement, she was extremely glad to be in any sort of company; and having no great delicacy in discrimination, she found more to approve than to condemn in those with whom she had passed, as she said, a most agreeable day.

Mourtray, who had a high respect for the character of a British merchant, and who had known, formerly, many commercial men of distinguished worth, was much disappointed to find Chowles so very different from what he had imagined.

Although

Although he entertained no doubt of his honesty and integrity, he had not found that openness and sincerity which he had expected ; for, whenever he had talked to him upon business, he either pleaded haste, or answered the questions put to him with some degree of evasion.

Mourtray had concluded that he should find a most hospitable reception, and a very handsome establishment, because it was well known that Chowles was exceedingly rich : but the ridiculous parade he had exhibited, convinced him that he had a vain, narrow mind ; and though he would readily have excused in him some degree of vulgarity, he was disgusted to observe that his manners were not only coarse, but forward and presumptuous.

As for his democratical principles, Mourtray soon saw they were the effect of excessive ignorance ; and that, not understanding in the least what he pretended

tended to admire, he had only a confused notion that there ought to be an equality in conditions; though he would have been very sorry to have this extended to wealth.

Finding himself, however, necessarily connected with this man, in consequence of his late cousin's bequest, Mourtray judged it prudent not to disclose, even to his family, the unfavourable impression he had received of his character.

CHAP. VIII.

THE following morning, just as Mrs. and Miss Mourtray were going out, Lord Wilmington was announced. Nothing could be more unexpected than this visit, as it was an honour he had very rarely conferred on the family at Downton.— After a profusion of bows, smiles, and compliments, he threw himself into a chair opposite to Emma ; whose appearance, improved by her mourning habit, and a fashionable style of head dress, did not escape his notice ; and, whilst he was making fine speeches to Mrs. Mourtray, with his eyes seemingly cast down, he was employed in reviewing the charms of her lovely daughter, whenever he could, unobserved, steal a glance towards her.

Mrs.

Mrs. Mourtray, who imagined she had cause to be dissatisfied with him, and his whole family, paid little regard either to his sudden condescension, or to the apologies he undertook to make for the Ladies; but, desirous of shewing that she had acquired some importance, she hastened to impart to him the news of the accession of fortune, with all its circumstances, which had enabled her to see her friends in town.

Though she would not, for the world, have told a premeditated lie, she could not refrain from enlarging on her future prospects; in fact, always seeing things as she wished them to be.

The Earl feigned to listen to this communication with the greatest interest; but, though an agreeable surprize was pictured on his face, he already knew the most essential part of it. Delighted, however, to be furnished with so plausible
a pre-

a pretence for redoubling his civilities, after assuring her that he never had heard of any event that gave him half so much pleasure, as of her increase of fortune, he talked of her husband as one of the persons whom he most esteemed; lamented that he had not the happiness of seeing him more frequently at Wilmington; gently reproached her for having confined herself so much at Downton; and concluded by protesting, that the Ladies in Grosvenor Square were absolutely wretched; that bad colds had prevented their having the honour of calling upon such valuable, such amiable friends (looking at Emma), as Mrs. and Miss Mourtray.

He then, just before he took his leave, entreated them to have the goodness to wave ceremony, and indulge Lady Wilmington with their company at dinner the following day;—"and do, my dear Miss Mourtray," added he, "prevail
upon

upon your excellent father to be of the party: six o'clock is our hour: you know my exactness, having often made us supremely happy by becoming our guest at Wilmington. I am forced to be a great œconomist of time, being always overwhelmed with business, and never having a minute I can call my own: this makes me as regular as clock work; and, unless I am detained at the House of Lords, the dinner is served precisely at the appointed time, for I never wait for any body."

As he finished these words, he seemed swelling with self-importance; but he recollected he was to be condescending, so he put on a gracious smile, and, profoundly bowing, left the room.

To account for his sudden appearance, and the motives that induced him to be so very condescending, what had previously

viously passed in Grosvenor Square must be related.

It may easily be supposed, that Fame had not been silent concerning the legacy: every circumstance of it, told a hundred different ways, had long since reached the ears of the Wilmington family; but the Ladies had so many important affairs on their hands, that they had scarcely attended to a matter so uninteresting to them, as the good luck of the Mourtrays.

Upon the Earl it made more impression; because it would add to the consequence of a man whose influence he wished to secure; for a rumour had generally prevailed, during the last week, of an immediate dissolution of Parliament, which was an event that always produced a violent fermentation in his mind.

While

While he had been sitting at breakfast that morning, pretending that he was reading the newspapers, to avoid conversation, he had in reality been ruminating on election matters, and blaming his own want of foresight, in not having redoubled his civilities to Mourtray; who, though possessed of only a small estate, could command several votes, being extremely beloved and respected; and possessing, by a sort of hereditary right, transmitted from a long race of ancestors, much influence with several considerable freeholders.

In the borough, likewise, that Lord Wilmington had chosen to consider as the entire property of the noble house of Fontelieu, Mourtray had so many friends, that, if he were disposed to give his interest to Sir William Elliston, who already seemed secure of carrying his own election, there was reason to apprehend that the Baronet, thus strengthened, might

even presume to contest his right to name the other member.

As soon, therefore, as he heard of Mourtray's late acquisition, he resolved instantly to write him a letter, full of flattery and congratulations; but, unfortunately, just at that time, his head was so puzzled by a variety of political schemes, that not only his intended letter, but what he had heard of the Mourtray's arrival, had escaped his memory. At that instant it suddenly recurred: he started; and, clapping his hand to his forehead,—“ Pray,” said he, “ did not I hear some of you say, that the Mourtrays either were in town, or shortly to come?”

“ O, yes, papa;” cried Lady Bell, “ they have been come some days.”

“ Have you seen them?” asked he, hastily.

“ No:

"No: I can't say I have; for I have not yet had time to go to them."

"Then you have done very wrong; very wrong indeed, not to have called upon them! I thought Emma Mourtray was your dearest friend."

"O! undoubtedly! that is to say, in the country, papa; but here, you know, it is quite a different thing: I have another set of friends."

"Really, I do not understand your distinctions: you talk of your friends as you do of your summer and winter clothes; and to lay aside these, or those, with equal unconcern."

"O! Indeed I shall be monstrously happy to see Emma; but I am sure, papa, I never suspected that *you* cared a straw about the Mourtrays."

“ *You* never suspected, indeed ! How came you to be a competent judge,” said Lord Wilmington, angrily, “ of what I care or do not care about ? I tell *you*, Lady Isabella, and all of you, that I am very sorry, and quite shocked, that you have thus neglected these people.”

“ Upon my word, my Lord, to own the truth, I never thought about them !” said the Countess, carelessly.

“ Nor I, truly !” said Lady Elizabeth, with precisely the same air.

“ Then give me leave to tell you, Madam, it is by these neglectful ways,” said he, turning to Lady Wilmington, “ that you undermine my interest in — shire ; and often, in one hour, undo what I have been months and years labouring to bring about.”

Lady Wilmington, without replying to this speech, said, she had rather a partiality to the girl, who was pretty and good-humoured, and really much superior to the rest of the odious natives in their neighbourhood."

"Odious natives!" echoed the Earl, "Odious natives! Now you would exactly use these very words, if twenty people were in the room, and though you knew they would be repeated where they would affront in the highest degree!"

"Why, surely, papa," said Lady Elizabeth, "our vulgar neighbours are as detestable to you as to us?"

"No, no, no! None are detestable who will do as I please; and I charge you to be very guarded, when speaking of every person or thing in the county.—But no more of this:—to make amends

for the past, I myself will call upon the Mourtrays this morning, and ask them to dine here to-morrow."

"With all my heart," said Lady Wilmington, "but, pray, let them understand, that we do not dine till six o'clock, or I shall have them here before I begin to dress."

"I would give something," cried Lady Bell, as soon as her father had left the room, "to know what makes papa, suddenly, so wondrous civil."

"I cannot conceive," replied her sister.

"Pshaw!" said Lady Wilmington, "it is some nonsensical scheme about an election: I dare say he wants Mr. Mourtray's votes."

Lord Wilmington's extraordinary civilities had afforded as much cause of astonish-

astonishment to the Ladies in Wimpole Street as in Grosvenor Square; but, when Mourtray heard what had passed, as he knew the report respecting parliament, and had received several letters lately from the country, he easily accounted for the whole; keeping, however, his surmises to himself.

The next day a violent cold prevented Mrs. Mourtray from stirring out; so only Emma and her father went to Grosvenor Square. Lord Wilmington received them with such an affectation of joy, and overwhelmed them with so many compliments, that Mourtray nearly lost all patience; but, though Emma occasionally seemed to fix his attention, he always pretended to be chiefly occupied with her father.

Lady Wilmington, who had been well tutored by her Lord, was likewise very gracious: Lady Elizabeth, in her cold
 I 4 manner,

manner, made an effort to be civil; but Lady Bell expressed such warmth of affection and pleasure at seeing her dear friend, as appeared to her totally incomprehensible, after her chilling note.

The fact was, Lady Bell, with little sensibility, was always decided by the caprice of the moment: when first she heard of Emma's arrival, her head was full of a ball, to which she was going at night; and so many projects had since occupied her, as to leave no room for any other ideas.

Now, when she saw Emma, she happened to be dissatisfied with her sister; who, for want of some body else, she had made the repository of many of her secrets; but no sooner did she see her rural friend, than it struck her, that she would make a much better confidante; and, longing to talk of herself, her conquests, and

and her plans, a violent fit of affection came over her.

There were two other Ladies in the room, great friends of the Countess, whose characters were of that common sort as to require no particular delineation ; and one Gentleman, who had little remarkable, excepting an extraordinary share of patience, which enabled him to listen, for hours, to the Earl's discussions on politics.

But, at present, his ears were spared ; for Lord Wilmington, having much curiosity to learn the real truth concerning Mourtray's acquisition of fortune, drew him aside, to gather from him a full detail of the whole ; and he learned, not without secret satisfaction, that he was far from being yet in possession of the Antigua estate : he disguised this, however ; and, with his spread hand on his breast, declared, upon his honour, the

sincere pleasure it gave him to hear, that the ancient and truly respectable family of the Mourtrays would now recover part of their wonted lustre. Of his own views and schemes, in which he wanted Mourtray's assistance, he forbore to speak till he had an opportunity of greater privacy.

Dinner was now announced; and nothing could astonish Emma more than the difference she observed between Lady Wilmington in the country, and Lady Wilmington doing the honours of her table in town: she was now perfectly well bred, attentive to her guests, cheerful, and taking her part in conversation: not fitting mute, as used to be her general custom, with her elbow resting on the table, rather picking than eating any thing, because she affected ill health; often shrugging her shoulders, and looking cross, because some unfortunate man had thrust his knife into his mouth, when
he

he ought to have used his fork ; or had teased her, by drinking her health ; a ceremony she abhorred.

Just after the removal of the soup, whilst she was helping the fish, she suddenly asked her Lord, whether he did not expect Lord Miramont ?

“ Yes ; but you know I never wait for any body,” was the reply.

“ Ah ! how unlucky !” thought Emma, “ that he does not come ! I should have seen the finest man in town.”

Before she became so intimate with Lady Bell, she had taken her idea of a fine Gentleman from the accounts she had read, with Du Maffon, of Louis the Fourteenth, and his court, and adapted him to her own country, according to the model of Sir Charles Grandison, only depriving him of a wig, a full-dressed

coat, and a sword. But though Lady Bell had rectified her notions on this head to a great degree, and prepared her to see a very negligent style of dress, she still expected to find something very striking in a fine man, especially in his manners.

The first course was just removed, and the second placed upon the table, when the door opened, and in stalked a tall handsome young man; who, just nodding his head to the Earl, flung himself into the vacant chair, by the side of the Countess.

“Faith! I did not think it had been so late,” said he, settling himself at the table.

“O! you never know hours,” cried Lord Wilmington. “What does your Lordship choose to eat?”

“What

“What I can get,” answered the other, with a smile; well knowing that it was contrary to rule, in that house, to have any dish brought back again; therefore, contenting himself with what he found, without uttering another word, he began eating with great dispatch (as he was so much behind hand with the rest of the company), and with too much eagerness to observe who was at the table.

Meanwhile Emma, who had dined, had full leisure to observe him: his face and figure struck her as the handsomest she had ever seen; but her surprize was inexpressible at his slovenly dress and inattentive manners. She wondered how he had ventured to appear before Lady Wilmington, so fine and delicate herself, with his hair uncombed and scratched different ways, and in pantaloons! Although the fashion of thick neck-cloths was not unknown to her, the stranger's was so very enormous, and she observed
so

so many waistcoats peeping from underneath his coat, that, in despite of his good looks, she concluded he was labouring under some severe rheumatic complaint.

Lady Bell, who sat next to her, now said, in a half whisper—"Is not Miramont charming? How knowing he looks!"

"Why really," replied Emma, "I cannot conceive how you discover this at present; though, I suppose, he has had some education."

"Education!" exclaimed Lady Bell: "yes, yes; Lady Fredville has long since undertaken the care of that."

"It is a pity, then, she does not fashion him better."

"Lord!

“ Lord ! he is quite the thing ; the go in every respect.”

“ Indeed !” cried Emma : “ all this is far beyond my comprehension : but who s Lady Fred . . .”

“ Hush, hush !” interrupting her, said Lady Bell : “ mamma looks grave ; she is watching me ; another time I will tell you more.”

The deffert was now brought, and Lord Miramont, being unoccupied, began to look about him : his eyes rested on Emma with an expreffion of wonder and delight, which made her blush ; and she heard him softly ask her name of the Countefs, who very concifely answered, Miss Mourtray.

He then entered into a lively converfation with the Ladies, faying fome jocofe things, particularly to Lady Bell ; but
for-

forbore joining in discourse with the men, because Lord Wilmington was got deep into politics.

“ You and I,” said he, addressing the Earl, “ differ in our opinions, and I hate an argument. Let matters take what course they will, whilst I have youth and health, nothing will affect me much.”

“ Pardon me, Lord Miramont; you will find the contrary; for if we do not succeed in destroying the French republic, we are not safe ourselves; and it grieves me exceedingly to observe, in these critical times, how little your Lordship attends to the affairs of the nation: you never come down to the House.”

“ I leave the affairs of the nation,” said Lord Miramont, laughing, “ to such wise heads as your’s, Lord Wilmington, to fettle. The House is a confounded bore, whither I will go as seldom as possible ;

sible ; but if there was any real danger to be apprehended from the French, every true Briton's arm and fortune, and mine amongst the rest, would be employed against them."

" Yet your Lordship is mighty fond of every thing in the French style. I wish your partiality may not extend to their opinions."

" My partiality is confined to their cooks, and to their taste in houses, furniture, and women's dresses."

Lady Wilmington now arose, and the Ladies retired to their coffee.

" Do, pray, Lady Bell," said Emma, as soon as she could draw her aside ; " do, pray, explain what you hinted concerning Lady Fredville's undertaking Lord Miramont's education ; for he appears, at least, three or four-and-twenty."

" Your

“ Your ignorance is extremely diverting,” answered she ; “ but, upon second thoughts, I shall leave to you this mystery, and many others, to develope ; which you will easily do, when you have been amongst us a little while.”

Lady Wilmington now beckoned Emma to take a seat near her, that she might learn the history of the legacy ; and having a far better heart than her Lord, she really felt pleased at the improvement of Emma’s situation.

The Ladies had not been long in the drawing-room before they were joined by Lord Miramont, who gaily advanced, saying, “ I have escaped from a cursed bore ; for they are talking below about election affairs, which I detest still more than politics.”

Then throwing himself down upon a sofa, with one leg stretched out its full length,

length, he took out his tooth-pick case, and sat some time attending to his teeth, without noticing any body in the room.

This was very spacious, at least fifty feet long : Lady Wilmington sat at one end of it, near the fire, engaged in discourse with her friends ; Lady Elizabeth was of this party, making fringe ; and Emma, sitting by Lady Bell, who was pouring out the coffee, at a little distance from the fire ; which was exactly opposite to the sofa occupied by Lord Miramont ; who suddenly cried out, “ Do come here, my dear Bell.”

“ Indeed I shan’t : why can’t you come to me ?”

“ I have been riding a match with Saunders this morning, and I am quite tired ;” and, he added, yawning, “ you are so good natured and compassionate,
my

my sweet cousin, that I know you will come."

"Well, pray," said Lady Bell, approaching him, "what have you to say?"

"Who is that sweet pretty girl, who looks so innocent and unlike you?"

"Innocent! and unlike me! How, savage, what do you mean by this pretty compliment?"

"O! I only mean that she has not yet acquired that easy air, so distinguished in you: but, once more, who is she?"

"A neighbour of our's in the country; my mother told you her name."

"What, the devil, is she your neighbour? Faith, now I know that, perhaps
I may

I may come and pass a month or two with you, during the dull time of summer, when nothing is to be done."

"O! you are mighty obliging; but, upon my word, I shall not be much flattered, should you come, if to see Emma is your only attraction."

"Why, you know I have sometimes had thoughts of being in love with you; but hitherto I have not had time."

"My dear Miramont, you have already so much on your hands," said Lady Bell, archly, "that certainly you have no leisure to think of us girls. Pray what are you going to do with yourself to night?"

"Lady Fredville is at home: she gives a supper."

"O!

“ O! then your destination is very clear.”

“ Pray can your friend talk?” said Lord Miramont; “ for I have not yet heard her voice.”

“ Yes, yes, she can talk; but, poor thing, she knows nothing of the world: you see she wants forming.”

“ I should not dislike to undertake the task; yet, hang it, I had better let it alone; for if a man now says three words to a girl, she immediately expects he is to propose to her; and marriage is not my vocation. But I wish, however, to be acquainted with Miss Mourtray.”

“ Come, then, I will present you to her.”

The ceremony of introduction over, Lord Miramont addressed himself equally to both Ladies.

“ Pray,” said Lady Bell, “ who won the match you rode this morning ?”

“ I won ; and Saunders was cursed mad ; he rode off in such a fury, that I feared he had demolished a poor hump-backed woman crossing the road.”

Lady Bell laughed ; whilst Emma exclaimed, “ Good Heaven !”——“ Don’t be alarmed, Madam,” said he : “ for I picked up the poor old soul, conveyed her safe home, and left her more pleased than sorry at the accident.

“ I protest, if I don’t believe,” said Lady Bell, “ that you took humpey *en croupe*.”

“ Well,”

“ Well, suppose I had ? Do you think I should mind being laughed at, when a person's life was concerned ? ”

“ But you were not the person who hurt her ? ”

“ What signifies that ? Saunders rode off and left her sprawling on the road : I should have been a brute if I had not taken care of her. So I carried her in my arms to her house, which was at no great distance.”

The rest of the Gentlemen now joined the Ladies ; and tea being over, Mr. Mourtray and his daughter departed, loaded, as on their arrival, with Lord Wilmington's civilities, and apparently in high favour with the Countess.

On her return home, Emma related to her mother all the occurrences of the day ;

day; but when she spoke of Lord Miramont she felt embarrassed, not having clearly decided what opinion to form of him: his figure, however, dwelt on her mind.

CHAP. IX.

THE next morning Lady Bell came to see Emma: she had walked to Wimpole Street, attended by her governess and a footman. Mrs. Mourtray being confined with her cold, Emma alone received her; and her behaviour now was as warm as it had formerly been in the country.

“Do you know,” said she, “it was with difficulty I persuaded mamma to let me walk here; for she hates me to walk in the streets: but, if I had my way, I would parade all the morning up and down the fashionable side of Bond Street. —However, I was at last suffered to come to you, provided I took that clog Madame Du Plomb (for so Lady Bell always called Madame Duplin) with me. Thank God she is rather deaf, and, besides,

besides, scarcely understands a word of English."

She now communicated to Emma, in a low voice, what she called her secrets; matter too frivolous to be worth recording; and, having unburthened herself, she proceeded to talk of her cousin Miramont.

"You know," said she, "he is mamma's nephew, and she doats upon him. I believe she would have been very glad had he shewn any wish to marry me, and rather expected he would, when first we returned from Ireland: but, strange to tell, he seems to have no such idea! But, for my part, I don't care about him; no, not at all, I assure you; though I think him very charming. My objection to him as a husband is, that he is so self-willed; I know he would be hard to manage.—He has been his own master almost from a child; for my uncle Mi-

ramont died when he was very young, and my aunt adored him to such a degree, she would never suffer him to be contradicted : so he ran wild about the town, and got into all sorts of scrapes, being of a very dashing turn.—My aunt died before he came of age, but long before that he had rendered himself famous for his gallantries with married women ; and now, for these last six months, he has attached himself entirely to . . . ”

Here Lady Bell was interrupted by Mrs. Prouting, who, affecting nimbleness, came flying up to Emma, shaking her hand with the same freedom as if she had long been her most intimate friend.

This interruption Emma thought extremely provoking, and her curiosity remained unsatisfied ; for Lady Bell could not stay. As she departed, she whispered—“ Heaven and earth ! how came you

you acquainted with that pretended fine lady?—the vulgarest of creatures!”

Emma did not venture to answer; and, as soon as Lady Bell was gone, Mrs. Prouting broke out thus:—“*That* Lady Isabella Fontelieu, is a most affected girl!”—when, seeing Emma look extremely displeased, she added—“Excuse me, Miss Mourtray, for being so free spoken; I hope, however, she is not a friend of your’s.—How strangely she dresses! Every body stares at her wherever she appears; but she has a most undaunted countenance. I should like, however, to know who makes her gowns.”

Emma made no answer; and being little disposed to converse with Mrs. Prouting, the latter, finding nothing to amuse her, took her leave, secretly rejoicing that chance had given her an opportunity minutely to examine the celebrated Lady Isabella Fontelieu’s dress,

that she might exactly imitate it. No creature ever had so great a desire to be a fine lady as she unfortunately had, who had not a single requisite to make her one.

Two days after the dinner in Grosvenor Square, Lady Wilmington and Lady Bell called upon the Mourtrays; the former graciously presented an opera ticket to Emma, saying, that as her eldest daughter was confined with a swelled face, she had room for her in her box; and if she chose to come and dine with her, she would carry her that evening to the opera, which would be very full and brilliant, being the benefit of a favourite dancer.

The proposal was thankfully accepted, and Mrs. Mourtray made no opposition; for, besides that her cold still continued bad, she felt sensible that she must accustom herself to see Emma in town, as
she

she had been in the country, the sole object of Lady Wilmington's favour.

Yet, conscious of her newly-acquired riches, she felt more at her ease in the presence of the haughty Countess than ever she had before : on the strength of these she talked to her of her affairs, presuming she must, on account of her daughter, take some interest in them, and, throughout the whole of the visit, endeavoured to converse with her with a degree of freedom which (though extremely well born herself) she never durst venture, when depressed with the consciousness of her narrow fortune.

Lady Wilmington listened to all she said with a careless, absent air ; scarcely uttered three syllables ; and whilst she was yet speaking, abruptly rose to depart.

None of the various mortifications she had before inflicted on Mrs. Mourtray

gave her so much offence as this behaviour ; for, besides the total indifference it shewed in her concerns, she never could understand that what she took so much pleasure in relating any body could be tired of hearing.

Lady Bell, who saw her colour with anger, squeezed her hand kindly at parting, and protested that, in despite of her cold, she looked quite handsome, now that she dressed in the fashion.

“ That young lady,” said Mrs. Mourtray, shutting the door after Lady Bell, “ is very wild, but good natured : her mother is more insufferable than ever.”

Emma made no answer ; the opera ticket had won her heart ; for that, however, she was indebted to Lord Wilmington, who insisted upon Lady Wilmington's giving it to her.

The

The dinner party in Grosvenor Square was confined to the family and Lord Miramont, who dined there almost every day : he had been at court in the morning ; but though he had changed his clothes, he had omitted to dishevel his hair, so that he now had entirely the appearance of a man of fashion : and as he was extremely pleasant and agreeable, without, however, possessing, in the slightest degree, those highly polished manners that Emma had once settled in her own mind as indispensable in a well-bred man, she began to suppose that those had been exploded, as formal and troublesome : yet she could not help thinking that even Lord Miramont would appear to greater advantage if he were as polite and attentive as either her father or Sydney.

The Ladies never sitting long after dinner, and Lady Wilmington seldom going to the opera till very late, she proposed, after coffee, to have a little music,

and desired Lord Miramont to sing with his cousin Bell some beautiful duos of Jackson's. He sung a second charmingly; her voice was very fine; and Emma, who loved music passionately, was all ear.

The fine figure of this young Marquis; a certain grace that seemed natural to him, and which appeared more striking now that his person was not disfigured by neglect; his exquisite taste in music, and his good humour, soon interested Emma in his favour. Those little defects that she had perceived at first, as well as the hints Lady Bell had given of his irregularities, insensibly were forgotten; whilst she dwelt with approbation on the good-nature and humanity he had manifested in regard to the hump-backed woman.

Lord Miramont now departed, and the Ladies went to the Haymarket. As Emma
had

had never heard music, excepting in private performances, she was so enchanted to hear it in such perfection at the opera, and so delighted with the novelty and splendour of the *spectacle*, that, at first, her eyes were rivetted to the stage ; till recollecting that she had not heard Lord Miramont say whether she should go to the opera, a sentiment, which she imagined to be curiosity ; induced her to ask Lady Bell if he often attended it ?

“ Never misses, at least, coming in time to see the last dance.”

“ Is he, then, who is so excellent a musician himself, indifferent to all but dancing ?”

“ Oh, he loves music very much, and so do I ; but nobody comes to the opera for the sake of *that* :—but if you wish to see him, there he is, opposite to you, with his dear Lady Fredville.”

"She seems handsome," said Emma ;
"but at this distance she appears to me
old."

"She is above forty ; but that's no
matter ; this is the reign of old women ;
they have more lovers than the young
ones."

"Impossible !—this, Lady Bell, is one
of your jokes.—Lady Fredville, I con-
clude, is a widow."

"A widow !—dear, no ; her lord is sit-
ting in the back of the box."

"Good Heaven ! a married woman !"

"Why, do you suppose that being mar-
ried prevents a woman from having
lovers ? It is just the contrary, I assure
you."

Emma

Emma was much shocked, though she firmly believed that Lady Bell, in her light way, misrepresented things ; still she felt pained that Lord Miramont, of whom she wished to think well, should have even the appearance of impropriety in his conduct. Whilst she was meditating on this point, she suddenly missed him from the spot whither her eyes had been invariably directed ; and she concluded he was coming to Lady Wilmington's box.

Presently after, she heard the door behind her open ; and not daring to look round, because she felt herself blush at the idea of seeing Lord Miramont, without being able to define whence her emotion arose, she remained immoveably turned towards the stage, till a loud rough voice, which she instantly knew to be that of Chowles, saluted her ears with —“Servant, Ladies, servant :—So, Miss Mourtray, I've found you at last ; and a fine hunt I've had after you !”

“After

"After me, Sir!" cried Emma, provoked at this familiarity: "I am sure, Mr. Chowles, I did not wish you should give yourself this trouble."

When, looking towards the Countess, not without some apprehension of the effects of this intrusion, she perceived her head had risen some inches higher, and that anger and amazement were depicted on her countenance; and, by a side glance at Lady Bell, that the muscles of her face were working to stifle a violent fit of laughter.

Chowles, in the mean while, totally unconcerned, drew a vacant chair, and wedged it as close as he could between Lady Wilmington's and Emma's, his broad face leaning over their shoulders; when, finding himself seated to his mind, he began his remarks on the opera, perfectly at his ease, and seemingly without observ-

observing that he had all the conversation to himself.

A circumstance so new and unprecedented, as a stranger's presuming to force himself into a place so sacred as her box, seemed to deprive the Countess of all her faculties; therefore, from the instant he had seated himself, excepting drawing up her gown, and exclaiming, "Sir! Sir!" with a toss of her head, her mouth remained closely pursed up, and her eyes distended with astonishment.

"Pray, my Lady," said the undaunted Chowles, "do you now understand what those there squalling gentry say?"

No answer from Lady Wilmington; only her eye-brows rose a little higher.—He then repeated his question in a louder key, choosing to suppose her Ladyship deaf.

But

But Emma, who well knew that she would not deign to answer him, now said, softly—"Lady Wilmington attends to the music, Sir, and she does not like people should talk to her during the performance."

She had not, however, courage to add, that his company could well be dispensed with.

At that instant Lord Miramont entered the box, to the great relief of his aunt; who, with a significant shrug of her shoulders, and side glance at Chowles, complained of his intolerable intrusion; as, likewise, of her daughter's absurdity; for, to her utter surprize, Lady Bell was just then deeply engaged in admiring a ring, which Chowles, with his little finger thrust out, desired her to observe; saying, "It is a very curious *antick*, I assure you."

But

But so far from meeting in Lord Miramont the feelings she expected, the sight of so odd a figure stuck close to her, and the misery it occasioned, struck him only in a ludicrous light; and joining with Lady Bell, whom the whole scene diverted extremely, he also began to *quizz* him: whilst poor Emma, mortified to appear the acquaintance of this object of ridicule, now felt chagrined at the arrival of the Marquis, for which before she had secretly longed.

As for Chowles, since he had been encouraged by Lord Miramont and Lady Bell, he seemed to have acquired additional spirits as well as courage; for, seeing Lady Wilmington with her snuff-box open in her hand, he suddenly introduced into it his finger and thumb; using no further ceremony than saying, "With your leave, my Lady."

This

This freedom was more than she possibly could endure ; and she was on the point of giving vent to her wrath, but she checked herself ; and, turning to her nephew—" Do, pray," said she, " give this box to the man at the door, and tell him to fling away the contents."

" Very right, perfectly right," cried Chowles, with the greatest composure ; " I thought it dry and bad. Will your Ladyship try some of my blackguard ; 'tis of the right sort, I assure you ;" producing a very large gold box, set round with brilliants.

" No, Sir, no ;" cried Lady Wilmington, in a loud angry voice ; " I hate blackguard, and every sort of blackguard."

" Do you, really ?" said Chowles, who seemed not at all to suppose any thing personal to himself was meant by this speech:

speech: "Well, luckily, I can accommodate you with some excellent rappee."

"You can only accommodate me one way, Sir," said Lady Wilmington, whom rage, in despite of herself, impelled to speak; but he no longer heard her; for, just then, looking down into the pit, he discovered his cousins, the Proutings: "O ho! there they are," cried he; "I protest I must go and speak to them; but I will be back in a few minutes."

"Was ever assurance equal to this fellow's!" exclaimed Lady Wilmington, as he left the box. "Pray, Miss Mourtray, who is this man, and how did he dare to set his foot in my box?"

"He is an acquaintance of my father's, Madam," replied she, trembling at the impending storm; "and I suppose he did not know..."

"You

" You suppose, indeed ! " interrupted Lady Wilmington ; " I should like to know, whether you suppose *that* gives him a right to obtrude his company upon me ? "

" No, indeed, Madam ; I am sure I was very sorry when he came ; and extremely shocked you should be troubled with him. "

" Pray, then, why did not you instantly tell him, that he neither ought nor could stay here ? This box, I would have you to understand, is my private property. But, I promise you, since you have such strange, low-bred acquaintance, I shall take care not again to expose myself to their impertinence by taking you out with me. "

Emma, extremely hurt and abashed, held her head down, her eyes filling with tears ; which Lord Miramont perceiving,
he

he said—"Now, my dear Lady Wilmington, how can you be so unjust to impute any blame to Miss Mourtray on this occasion? You could not expect she should tell this man to leave your box; and it was mere ignorance that brought him into it."

"Then he should be taught better," said Lady Wilmington, still very angry; "but there appeared to me full as much insolence as ignorance in the whole of his behaviour."

"Your Ladyship cannot, at least, be accused of having neglected to teach him better; for your looks and manners conveyed pretty forcible reproofs."

"Not half strong enough, I conclude; for he did not seem to notice them; and I certainly should have bid him depart, if, by holding any converse with such a fellow,

low, I should not have demeaned myself."

"Well, I must say, I saw nothing but matter for laughter in the whole affair."

"Very possibly; because you and Bell (whose behaviour to-night I shall not easily forget) are mighty ingenious in finding jokes out of nothing; and generally laugh when you ought to look grave. But this is the laughing age; young people now do nothing else but laugh; the decorum of former times is become obsolete; hence low people take liberties with their superiors, unheard of before this levelling age."

"Now, my dear Mamma, how was it possible to avoid laughing at such a quix?"
said Lady Bell.

"Very

"Very possible: did you see me laugh?" Then turning to Emma, she said, "I am not surprized that you should feel concerned at what has happened; however, since it cannot be remedied, compose yourself; and only remember, in future, Miss Mourtray, that when I invite you to be of any party with me, positively I exclude all your acquaintance."

Emma inarticulately attempted to express her regret at this unfortunate circumstance, and was adding something very submissive; but Lord Miramont interrupted her—"Pooh, pooh, do not let this nonsense vex you, Miss Mourtray; 'tis not worth a thought."

"That is as you think," said Lady Wilmington, gravely; "but I am of a different opinion; for, really, to have such a man stuck up by me during half the opera, is, indeed, too bad."

Lord

Lord Miramont now, to dissipate her displeasure, adroitly started subjects he knew to be agreeable to her; and, after some rubs, he succeeding in restoring her to good humour.

His aim had not been lost upon Emma, and it strengthened the opinion she had already formed of his good nature: fascinated by his exterior, she readily gave him credit for numberless good qualities, and studiously tried to believe him free from whatever faults were imputed to him. But, whilst she was giving her whole attention to his lively conversation, the dance ceased, and in an instant he was gone, to her no small surprize and disappointment; for she had concluded he would see his relations to their carriage; instead of which she met him in the passage, with Lady Fredville leaning on his arm, as Lady Wilmington was hurrying out of the house, in no small dread of Chowles's joining her; whom she

she perceived working hard to make his way through the crowd, apparently with this intention.

Emma learned, on her return home, that Chowles had made Mrs. Mourtray a visit early in the evening; and, upon hearing that she was gone to the opera, said he would go too.

“And, most unfortunately for me, he came!” said Emma; and she related all that had passed.

“Upon my word,” said Mrs. Mourtray, “I cannot see that Mr. Chowles was to blame. In a public place, as every person pays alike, he thought, I suppose, all parts of the house free to him; and what mighty harm could the poor man do Lady Wilmington? But I know she is the proudest woman in the world. Depend upon it, Mr. Chowles will be a much more useful acquaintance

to us than that fine Lady; and, as I am pretty well recovered of my cold, I have promised to make a party with him and his cousins at the play to-morrow."

This declaration did not contribute to raise Emma's spirits, already depressed; but she did not venture to make any objection to the scheme.

CHAP. X.

EARLY the following morning the family in Wimpole Street were agreeably surprized by the arrival of Henry Mourtray, whom they had not expected for some days: he had just taken his final leave of college; and, as he was to study the law, his father intended to place him in Chambers, near the Temple, under the care of an eminent Lawyer; but, although he had himself chosen this profession, he shewed so much distaste to it, as soon as he heard of this arrangement, and his mother exclaimed so loudly at the barbarity of burying a young man, with his expectations, in such an out-of-the-way place, that Mourtray, averse to argument, acquiesced with his wife's proposal, that he should reside with them; where, she affirmed, he could study equally well, if study he must; for which she saw

no greater necessity than did her son; but Mourtray would not give up this point, insisting that idleness would be his ruin.

Henry resembled his mother extremely in countenance, and somewhat in disposition, only he had quicker parts, and much stronger passions. Averse to every sort of application, impatient of controul, prone to anger, fond to excess of pleasure, vain, and extravagant, he rejoiced at being emancipated from the strict rules of a college life; and, with a handsome person, he flattered himself he should cut no despicable figure in the world of fashion.

He already knew much of the town; for, during the long vacation, when his father thought he was gone on a tour to the north with a friend, who promised to bear his expences, he had been, most part of the time, in London, indulging himself

himself in amusements better suited to his taste, than gaining any information by travel.

His friend, who was exactly congenial to him, had practised the same deception on his father,—a rich old man, whose habitation was still further removed from London than Downton, where he believed his son to be; and as he liberally supplied him with money, the young man as liberally supplied Henry; but, as two must naturally want more than one, when the old Gentleman's allowance was expended, the young one, who was secure of a good estate hereafter, found resources with the Jews.

It may easily, therefore, be imagined, that Henry received the news of the legacy, of which he purposed to possess by far the greater share himself, with excessive transports of joy; and Mrs. Mourtray, delighted beyond measure that she

should now have him always with her, was disposed, in the first moments of their meeting, with her usual garrulity, to open to him all the joys and comforts she had in store, in consequence of her improved circumstances; but Henry had no time to attend to her, for he had many important concerns to settle before he appeared in public.

Never having seen Mr. Chowles, nor Mr. and Mrs. Prouting, whom he concluded to be fashionable people, he thought it necessary to impress these strangers with a favourable opinion of his person, as he learned his family were to go with them in the evening to the play; therefore, instead of suffering his parents to enjoy his society, from whom he had been so long absent, his hair-dresser and tailor engrossed almost all his time till he went to the theatre; where, however, himself and family did not arrive till the second act of the play.

Chowles,

Chowles, and his party, had been stationèd in the box even before the drawing up of the curtain; and Henry's astonishment, when he saw the people who had partly been the cause of his taking so much pains with his person, was visible on his mortified countenance. "My God! Sister," said he, softly, to Emma, "can that fat, horrid-dressed man be the Mr. Chowles, of whose magnificence I have heard so much from my mother? Why, it is a disgrace to be seen with such figures as he and his cousins."

"Be silent, for Heaven's sake!" said Emma, apprehensive he should be heard: "Mamma is extremely partial to them; and my father, in regard to the legacy"

"Ah! that charming legacy!" interrupted Henry: "that cousin of our's was an excellent fellow!—Between you and

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I, though I did not tell the old folks so, I don't intend to bother my brains with law. No, no: I can do without it."

"Old folks!" repeated Emma, "Dear, Henry! what a term, when speaking of our good parents!"

"Nonsense! You would not have me call them the young folks, I hope?"

"Let us attend to the play," said Emma.

"Moral, sentimental stuff, that I detest; but I have much better sport in view.—Look in the stage box: you will see a beautiful creature, whose eyes seem fixed upon us: I think I have some recollection of her face."

"'Tis Lady Isabella Fontelieu," said Emma, "with a party unknown to me."

Henry

Henry now could think nor talk of any thing but Lady Bell; and Emma was equally attracted towards the stage box by another cause; for, in a corner of it, she perceived Lord Miramont!—A thousand hopes and fears now filled her mind: sometimes she thought he would cross the house, and come and speak to her: then she apprehended, that part of her company might disgust him from approaching her. Whilst she was thus wavering in opinion, Chowles, unobserved by her, was tearing an orange in quarters: which done, he held them in his spread hand, desiring she would take some; and though she declined the offer, he continued importunate in pressing it.

At that instant she perceived Lord Miramont had emerged from his corner, and was standing behind his cousin, both of them whispering and laughing, with their eyes fixed upon her and Chowles. Nothing could be more mortifying to her

than this circumstance; and Chowles now, for the first time, observed them.

“Odfo!” cried he, “there is the pretty young Lady, and the merry Gentleman, who were so funny at the opera!” And he began bowing and nodding very familiarly to them; but Lady Bell, not being at all in an affable mood, made him a very slight courtesy, and scarcely noticed Emma. Lord Miramont bowed to each.

Much discomposed, and to relieve herself from Chowles’s disagreeable attentions, Emma turned away her head, positively determined not to exchange another word with him.

As soon as the play was over, Lady Bell, her party, and Lord Miramont, left the house; and Emma’s hopes being thus disappointed, in regard to the latter, she felt more vexed and chagrined than ever.

She

She now lost all inclination to see the farce, though all theatrical amusements were new to her; but there was no possibility of retiring, as neither Mrs. Mourtray, nor Chowles, would, upon any account, have omitted seeing the whole.

Henry Mourtray, almost as tired as his sister of his company, had long since slipped away, and he returned no more.

Just before the conclusion of the farce, Sydney came into the box: he expressed the greatest pleasure at seeing the Mourtrays: said he had only arrived in town that evening, or should have done himself the honour of calling upon them; and, seeing the house beginning to thin, he offered to call for their servants.

Mrs. Mourtray, with whom he was by no means a favourite, would have declined his civilities; but Chowles said:

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“ Ay

“ Ay, ay ; let the Gentleman go, for I am monstrous hot ; and, hark’ee, Sir, when you ask for Mr. Mourtray’s carriage, speak a word for mine : my name is Chowles, at your service.”

Emma, ashamed of his vulgarity and assurance, uttered, in a low voice, some apology for him to Sydney, who only smiled as he left the box ; but she, unable any longer to contain her displeasure, broke through her resolution of continuing silent :—“ That Gentleman, Mr. Chowles,” said she, “ whom you so unceremoniously employ to call your carriage, is Mr. Sydney, Lady Clannarmon’s son.”

“ Well, and what of that, my pretty nut-brown ?” for, of late, he had taken the liberty thus to denominate her.

“ My name, Sir, is Mourtray ; and I request you will be so good to remember

ber this, when you address yourself to me."

"Bless me!" cried Mrs. Mourtray, "what ails the girl? She is getting as proud and formal as Lady Wilmington herself."

"Ay, that's the good," cried Chowles, "of mixing with quality! I protest my poor brain never can remember (no offence, I hope, cousin Prouting); my poor brain, I say, never can remember all the forms required by your Honourables and Right Honourables.—I suppose that chap, too, is one of them sort of folks, or else Miss Mourtray would not have been angry with me just now."

Sydney's return put an end to the conversation. Chowles took charge of Mrs. Mourtray, followed by her husband and the Proutings, and Sydney offered his arm to Emma; but, as they had a little way
to

to walk to get to the carriage, the latter had time to satisfy his curiosity relative to her party; and, having seen her safely seated in the coach, took his leave.

Emma could not help acknowledging to herself, how infinitely he had the advantage of the Marquis in point of manners; and, perhaps, being piqued with the latter for not having come to her box, she did justice to Sydney with the less reluctance.

Mrs. Mourtray did not pass over in silence her daughter's behaviour to Chowles, which she condemned with some degree of asperity; but Mourtray took the part of Emma, observing, that his forward, ill-bred manners must naturally have the effect of disgusting every person of delicacy; and added, that he approved of her prohibiting the familiarity of his address.

“ For

“ For my part,” said Mrs. Mourtray, “ I have no notion of people’s being encouraged in pride.”

“ Nobody has more,” said he, “ than Chowles himself; but his is the dirty pride of over-grown wealth.”

“ Well, I see nothing of this: the poor man is very good natured, easy, and chatty; and I like him extremely. But, pray, did you observe that Lady Bell Fontelieu courtesied to all of us, with a doubtful sort of air, as if she did not know us?”

“ I noticed her little,” answered Mourtray, “ but I can easily believe so fine a Lady was not particularly anxious to acknowledge us for her acquaintance to-night.” Then, taking Emma’s hand, “ My dear girl,” said he, “ retain your amiable, natural manners, and never let example lead you into affectation. Be civil, but not

not fervile ; unite humility with the dignity of virtue ; and calmly, but resolutely, resist presumption."

A fortnight now passed without any particular occurrence. Mrs. Mourtray, being completely established in town, busied herself in enquiries how all those of her former acquaintance, who had not yet waited upon her, were disposed of. After an absence of more than twenty years, great changes, of course, must have happened amongst them ; and she found the numbers of those she had once known much reduced.

But those few that remained were very ready to renew acquaintance with her, and to introduce her to all their's, especially after they learned the improvement of her circumstances ; therefore, in a short time, she had more engagements than she could fulfil. Nothing, however, interrupted her intimacy with Chowles and
his

his relations, with whom she formed frequent parties; but Mourtray seldom (and Emma always reluctantly) associated with these people, merely to oblige her.

The latter frequently saw Lady Isabella, and sometimes met the Wilmington family; but the Countess, ever since the unpleasant scene at the opera, had honoured her with no further invitations. She met, occasionally, with Lord Miramont, in public, who always noticed her, though sometimes only with a nod; but when, without his seeking, an opportunity presented itself for him to speak to her, he was gay, civil, and good-humoured; yet he never gave himself the trouble to pay her any particular attentions.

This was a grievous mortification to Emma, who felt, from the first moment she saw him, a secret partiality in his favour, which each subsequent meeting increased, though she herself was far from
being

being conscious that he had made so deep an impression upon her heart.— Perhaps, too, her vanity, that inherent defect in her character, which the admiration she excited wherever she appeared did not tend to correct, was as much wounded as her sensibility by the indifference of the Marquis.

Sydney, in the mean while, was industrious to find opportunities of seeing her in public, as Mrs. Mourtray seldom allowed him admittance into her house: if he could even only see his adored Emma, at a distance, he felt delighted; but when he could exchange a word with her, or be of the least use in getting her a seat, or in assisting her to her carriage, or in performing any little commission, then his joy became excessive; but still he was far too timid to suffer his lips to betray the secret of his heart.

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As for Emma, she behaved to him exactly in town as she had done in the country; she even esteemed him more, in consequence of knowing him better; but the idea of ever considering him in any other light than as a friend never occurred to her as possible.

Her father, who perfectly developed not only what passed in her mind, but also in that of Sydney (seldom as he saw him), and who had formed the highest opinion of the excellence of his disposition, from the account he had heard of his conduct towards his brother, secretly wished that he might gain Emma's affections; though, from the observations he made relative to her sentiments, he scarcely dared flatter himself this would ever happen.

Mourtray, with many a sigh, contrasted the character of Sydney with that of his son;

son ; who, since his arrival in town, so far from giving a few hours, even in a morning, to study, rarely looked into a book ; and, indeed, was to be found any where else sooner than in his parents' house. When not lounging in the streets, his time was still worse employed ; and, though his father did not know exactly how, he had every reason to believe, from the hours he kept, that he was engaged in a career of folly, if not of vice.

Hitherto Mourtray, with his usual mildness, had only occasionally hinted his disapprobation of his proceedings, to which Henry negligently attended ; and as his mother never failed in having an apology ready for him, he often forbore making any for himself.

Whilst each individual of his family was pursuing his or her different amusements,

ments, Mourtray himself was much perplexed with his affairs ; the opinions of the lawyers were divided concerning his title to the estate bequeathed him ; and he was at times almost tempted, when some new difficulty was started, to leave Mr. Elward in the peaceable possession of it : but then Chowles, who pretended to know more about the estate than any body else, would vehemently exclaim at the absurdity of a man, not extremely rich and charged with a family, renouncing so valuable a property, to which he had an undoubted right ; offering himself to put the business into such hands in the island, as would infallibly gain the suit ; eagerly recommending it to be set on foot without delay, and to spare no expense to gain what he ventured to affirm would hereafter amply repay him.

Sometimes Chowles's arguments nearly prevailed ; and Mourtray was on the
point

point of desiring him to give the necessary directions to his agents in Antigua to renew the suit ; but then, again, his natural irresolution preponderated, and he dropped the subject for the present ; till, further urged by Chowles and Sharp, the other executor, he again listened to the various schemes they proposed, without adopting any of them.

One of these, however, that concerned part of the money in Chowles's hands, after much indecision, he was at last, by this man's address, induced to adopt. It was to advance ten thousand pounds in a secret commercial speculation ; for which, during three years, he was to receive a very low interest ; but, at the end of that period, Chowles clearly demonstrated it would produce, with a like sum advanced by himself, to both an enormous profit.

Occu-

Occupied, however, as Mourtray was with his intricate concerns abroad, he did not neglect those at home. Downton, that object of his predilection, required essential repairs ; for the decayed state of the house had long rendered it dangerous to inhabit.

A man, who was a surveyor, but who dabbled in architecture, gardening, and farming, recommended by the officious Chowles, was sent down to examine what was necessary to be done, and make his report of the capabilities of the place.

On his return, he produced a plan and estimate, apparently not unreasonable ; which, with less than his usual hesitation, Mourtray consented to have accordingly executed. But this man, being a very confident and expeditious genius, consulting more his own interest than either
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that or the wishes of his employer, immediately set about pulling and cutting down here, building and planting there, in a manner little dreamt of by poor Mourtray, and at an expense far exceeding the original agreement.

CHAP.

CHAP. XI.

LADY Bell still continued to profess the most ardent friendship for Emma; but all her fondness did not prevent her treating her, at times, when they met, with distant coldness, if she happened then to be surrounded by people of the ton.

A slight indisposition having confined her for some days at home, as soon as she recovered, she frequently asked Emma to walk with her in the Park; for she had coaxed her mother's confidential physician to prescribe exercise for her, as absolutely necessary to her health; and, accompanied by Madame Duplin, she was permitted to walk as much as she pleased. Attention to her health was the ostensible motive of this sudden inclination for exercise; but *that* which really actuated her, she hoped to keep concealed.

In these walks, two such lovely girls as Lady Bell and Emma were sure to be joined by several men; some accompanied them most of the time they staid in the Park; others occasionally took a turn or two with them; but there was one person who seldom quitted them.

This was a Lieutenant in the Guards, of the name of Darnford; whose chief recommendation seemed to be large black eyes, a fine shewy figure, and an immense stock of assurance.

Emma saw, with concern, his assiduity in attending on her friend; she ventured even to hint that it was improper to encourage him; but Lady Bell, who only laughed at what she called absurd prudery, disregarded her advice, and always, at parting, said to him—"Well, we shall meet again to-morrow. Pray for fair weather."

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In vain Emma conjured her not thus to make assignations with Captain Darnford; she would not attend to her; therefore, though sensible this measure would violently offend Lady Bell, Emma refused to accompany her any more. Regard for her own character, as well as the hope of putting an end to these parties, dictated her refusal; besides, she considered herself as under obligations to Lady Wilmington; and the Earl, of late, had manifested a very friendly disposition towards her father: gratitude, then, as well as honour, rendered it impossible she could countenance, by her presence, meetings that Lady Bell owned to be clandestine.

The latter, having ineffectually exerted all her eloquence to shake Emma's resolution, resented it at first most violently; but, finding amongst her acquaintance some accommodating companions, she ceased to importune her, though from that moment she conceived an ill will to-

wards her, that did not escape Emma's penetration, notwithstanding Lady Bell sometimes found it convenient to disguise it; but, if her favour depended on a fervile compliance with fancies prejudicial to both, she thought it was best to be deprived of it; though still she continued sincerely attached to her.

This change of sentiment in Lady Bell, did not, however, make much alteration in her intercourse with the Wilmington family; for the Earl, who had still his reasons for keeping well with the Mourtrays, observing that the Countess had discontinued to invite them to her house, frequently insisted upon having them at least at dinner; and Lady Wilmington herself saw so much to admire in Emma's behaviour, that insensibly she became very partial to her.

As for Lady Elizabeth, her coldness and reserve were unalterable; she was
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one of those persons whose feelings are concentrated in self-love.

One evening, Emma being at the opera with her mother, the Proutings, and Mr. Chowles, who now, in despite of her coldness, followed her like her shadow, Lord Miramont came into the pit; and though he did not join her, she observed that he hovered about, at a little distance, during a whole act; pretending, however, not particularly to notice her, otherwise than by a bow.

At length, during the dance, a vacant place being next to her, he carelessly sauntered towards it; and, seating himself, began to rally her on Chowles's very marked attentions.

This was almost the only disagreeable topic of conversation that he could have chosen, in the opinion of Emma, who tried in vain to get rid of it.

“ I wonder,” said the Marquis, “ whether his name is Henry ; for, as he calls you *his nut-brown maid*, you cannot do less than say, since he has had the cruelty to leave you—*And where is Emma’s joy, if Henry flies ?*”

“ I should much sooner be inclined to say, and great is Emma’s joy, whenever he is so obliging to depart. But,” added she, more gravely—“ if your Lordship will be so good to refrain from naming this man to me, you will really oblige me.”

“ Upon no account would I disoblige you,” said he : “ but will you permit me to say, I should like to know, since poor Mr. Chowles is so unfortunate, what sort of a man has more chance of gaining your favour.”

“ I have not thought on the subject,” answered she, colouring extremely : “ nor

is it worth exciting your Lordship's curiosity."

"I suspect he must not be fat and short, and inelegant in manners; but as accomplished and engaging as Prior makes his Henry."

"Engaging!" cried Emma; "I dislike his character; and I never could read his cruel trial of Emma with patience."

"Well, but the poet brought all right at last; and that is as things should be; and you must acknowledge, Miss Mourtray, it afforded an opportunity to the heroine of the poem, to shew unparalleled love."

"More than the object deserved; for he shewed an ungenerous distrust of her sentiments, and little delicacy in his own."

“ You are so good yourself, and refined in your notions, that you expect more perfection in others, than it is possible you should ever find. Believe me, young men are quite different sort of creatures from those imaginary heroes in novels, described as possessing every virtue, and exempt from every vice; which *very* young Ladies innocently suppose to be real pictures of life.”

“ Indeed,” said Emma, laughing, “ I have not formed my ideas of either men or women after novels. Perfection, I apprehend, is no where to be found; we are none of us as good as we ought to be; and, sensible of our own defects, we must view the errors of others with indulgence.”

“ I wish I knew the degree of indulgence,” said Lord Miramont, looking earnestly at her—“ you assign to every
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fort of error, and which you think entitled to the most."

"I do not pretend to judge of the conduct of others," replied she; "yet I think it cannot admit of doubt, that those errors are the least offensive that only injure the person who commits them; and that those that proceed rather from a weak head, than a bad heart, are the most excusable."

The return of Chowles interrupted a conversation which had been rather interesting to Emma, and had the effect to drive away the Marquis.

An idea, which though faintly traced, gave her, nevertheless, infinite delight, now arose in her mind, that Lord Miramont saw her with some degree of partiality: yet she well knew, by all she had heard since her acquaintance in the world became more extensive, that he

certainly was attached to Lady Fredville, who, she understood, was so artful and insinuating a woman, that it would be difficult for him to break from her fetters.

That he should have an attachment to a married woman, shocked the delicacy of her principles: but though she could not excuse this, she was more disposed to attribute his being thus entangled, to the arts of a wicked woman, and to the effects of bad example, than to the depravity of his own heart.

Could he but be weaned, she thought, from his improper attachment, and reformed in his principles in regard to women, how amiable he would be, and how happy the person who should become his wife!—Who ever possessed more advantages united? Handsome; captivating whenever he pleased; sensible, gay, and good-humoured; nobly
born

born, high in rank, and, without being very rich, having sufficient fortune to appear suitably to his dignity.

Emma, though a little vain, dared not, however, own to herself that ever the idea of being this happy woman entered her head: she therefore persuaded herself that her ardent desire to see him detached from Lady Fredville, was merely because she wished to see him quite perfect.

The report of the world concerning this lady was, that, in the various gallantries in which she had been engaged, she always shewed less tenderness towards her lover than desire of governing him; which her superior beauty and fascinating talents made no difficult task. — Though her temper was unequal and capricious, she had the art of attaching men beyond all other women; chiefly by studying their dispositions, consulting their inclinations, humouring their fancies,

cies, when she wanted to carry a point; and, above all, by making them find in her house the most perfect ease—every elegance in her establishment, and every sort of amusement.

Henry Mourtray, who had been in town some weeks, now declared to his father, that, finding in himself neither talents nor inclination for the study of the law, he wished to obtain his permission to go into the army.

Mourtray deferred, till he had maturely considered, giving any answer to this request; and possibly he might have protracted it a long while, had not the matter reached Lord Wilmington's ears, who eagerly seized so favourable an opportunity of conferring an obligation on the Mourtrays, by procuring, through his interest, a pair of colours for Henry.

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He said, however, nothing of this, either to him or his father ; for Emma was the person to whom he chose to announce this event. Therefore, one day, when she dined in Grosvenor Square, he drew her aside before dinner, and said, in a low voice, with his eyes twinkling, and his eternal grin on his face, “ My dear Miss Mourtray, I hope, knows what a sincere regard, value, and esteem I have for her ; and, indeed, upon her account, for all those belonging to her. It gives me, therefore, singular pleasure, that I am enabled, by the interest I have with my good friend, Lord —— to have the honour of presenting your brother with a pair of colours.”

Emma, extremely delighted with this intelligence, which she knew would be so agreeable to Henry, made her acknowledgments with so much warmth and grace, that Lord Wilmington, snatching her hand, gallantly pressed it to his lips,

lips ; protesting, that if, at any time, it could be his good fortune to be of the slightest use to her, in any way she would do him the honour to point out, she might command, without reserve, a person who was entirely devoted to herself and friends.

He was continuing in this style, when Emma, thinking he had said more than enough for the occasion, and rather surprized at an extraordinary glow that suffused his cheeks, judged it time to draw back. She returned, therefore, to her seat, after making him a low courtesy, but with such reserve of manner as instantly restored to the Earl's face its wonted scowl ; and, on some pretence, he left the room.

“ Pray, Emma,” cried Lady Bell, very loud, on purpose that her mother might hear her, “ Pray, has papa been saying sweet things to you ? for you have had a pretty long and animated tête-à-tête
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in the window ; and, if my eyes did not deceive me, I saw him kissing your lily hand."

" Really, Bell," cried Lady Wilmington, angrily, " you grow insufferably foolish. I think, at least, when you choose to make your silly jokes, you might find a fitter subject for them than your father."

" Upon my honour, mamma, . . ."

" Be silent ; let me hear no more of this nonsense !" interrupted Lady Wilmington : " Miss Mourtray, come here : —if Lord Wilmington's communication is not a secret, perhaps you will relate it to me ?"

" Certainly, madam," answered Emma, who simply mentioned the gift of the colours ; expressing her gratitude for it ; and Lady Wilmington, perfectly
fatis-

satisfied, said, she was pleased at the circumstance. Emma, however, knew that there was some truth in Lady Bell's surmises, though she was aware of her malicious intention of making mischief.

After dinner, in despite of her sulky looks, Emma communicated to her the subject of her secret conference with the Earl; upon which Lady Bell remarked, with a sneer, "that Emma's family, no doubt, would have cause to rejoice at the influence she had obtained with her father."

Emma, hurt and surprized at this speech, disclaimed, with some warmth, having ever attempted to acquire any with him; but Lady Bell, without speaking, with a toss of her head, left her, and for some time seldom exchanged a word with her, except in company, when she could not avoid it without incurring her mother's displeasure.

Emma

Emma had long felt, with concern, that she had erred in the too favourable opinion she had formed of Lady Bell's disposition ; but she still believed she had a very good heart ; and, not being at all prone to fickleness herself, her attachment resisted Lady Bell's slights.

Henry Mourtray was made supremely happy by his sister's intelligence ; because he should now wear a cockade and a red coat, which he fancied infinitely becoming. His father received it with his usual *sang froid*, acknowledging himself, however, obliged to the Earl ; but Mrs. Mourtray shed tears, anticipating the dangers to which his precious person would be exposed.

Henry, to do him justice, had no fear of encountering these ; for, though a complete coxcomb, he certainly was extremely brave and spirited.

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Had it not been for this new disturbance of Henry's going into the army, Mrs. Mourtray would have considered the present period of her life as the happiest she had known since the days of her romance of bread and cheese, and love in a cottage had ended.

As youth and beauty had faded, her notions of happiness had undergone much alteration: now her delights were centred in a carriage (the want of which she had so long lamented), in a good house in London, and in bustle and company.

Emma was still the object of her fond affection; less on account of her amiable qualities, than because she was excessively pretty. Henry, too, whom she loved to excess, was chiefly valued for his beauty; and the same want of penetration which prevented her discerning her daughter's superior merit, rendered her blind to his foibles. As to her husband, she

she loved him from habit ; but his absence of mind, his taciturnity, his insensibility to trifles (objects to her of the utmost importance), often provoked her. She was, however, good-natured, and meant well ; therefore certainly was concerned whenever she saw him suffer ; but as her feelings were far from refined, her behaviour, on many occasions, rather teased than relieved him : still, however, he loved her tenderly.

Having, for so large a portion of her life, endured the inconveniences of a narrow income, her chief solicitude was to procure an affluent establishment for her daughter ; not, perhaps, without thinking of the advantages she might derive from this herself. The immense wealth of Chowles, and all the magnificence he displayed, so completely dazzled her eyes, that, forgetting the disparity of their years, the difference of their characters, sentiments, and inclinations,

nations, she thought that, as he seemed extremely in love with Emma, it would be very wrong to lose an opportunity of disposing of her so advantageously, and that her gentleness and pliancy of temper would prevent her making much opposition.

Always in a hurry about every thing, exactly the reverse of her husband, she had no sooner formed this project, than she determined not to rest till it was accomplished : but in this she met unexpected obstacles ; for, upon disclosing it to Mourtray, he, with more firmness than usual, protested that he would never consent even to have the subject mentioned to Emma ; convinced it must be disagreeable to her ; and added, that he himself had many objections to such a choice.

With Henry, whom she endeavoured to draw over to her opinion, Mrs. Mourtray had as little success ; for he impetuously

ously exclaimed, stepping back some paces,—“What, marry Emma, one of the prettiest girls in London, to that old goggle-eyed fellow ! Why, surely, madam, you have lost your senses !”

“Nay, but, Henry, only think what a vast fortune he has !”

“Curse on him and his fortune, too ! What the devil do you suppose nobody but that fellow is ever to be in love with her ? I dare say, whenever she chooses, she may marry a man full as rich, without his being such a *quix*. Pray, don’t name him again ; it makes me sick to hear of him.”

Since his acquaintance began with the Mourtrays, Chowles, for the first time in his life, felt a something at his heart which convinced him that there were other passions full as troublesome as covetousness ; and he settled he would have
Emma,

Emma, cost what she would. But he soon found that he had only one ally in her family; and this ally powerless to promote his cause. he perceived, therefore, that, to carry it, he must depend upon himself alone.

Although the display of his wealth seemed hitherto to have made no impression in his favour, he still could not conceive that the first of all goods, according to his ideas, should fail in attractions to another.

As balls now were much the fashion, Chowles resolved to give one that should far surpass, in magnificence, all those daily given by the nobility:—this, he hoped, would enchant Emma: but he had some difficulty in arranging this business; for he had very few acquaintance at the west end of the town. However, he was fortunately relieved by learning that it was now the custom for persons to
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fill their houses by getting others to invite their company ; and that no more was expected from the owner than to provide the entertainment.

Mrs. Prouting, therefore, was the agent he meant to employ with those great Ladies, whose assistance he required on this occasion. Her family name was Chowles ; but, in the early part of the merchant's life, when his fortune and future prospects were low and humble, her parents and self had constantly disowned his belonging to them : yet no sooner had he, by unwearied industry, and some fortunate chances, accumulated great wealth, than the whole family were eager to claim relationship with him.

Old musty parchments were produced, and carefully examined : a doubtful sort of genealogy appeared, but which they declared was perfectly clear ; and they decided that he was descended from the
same

same stock as themselves : he was, therefore, gratified with a long pedigree ; and, though he cared little about the matter, at their request, he took proper measures to blazon the arms of Chowles.

His cousin, who had married an indigent man of fashion (the younger brother of an Irish peer), was one of the most eager to cultivate his acquaintance ; and, as his former habits of life, and his long absence from England, had made him, on his return, feel like a stranger in London, nothing could be more convenient to him than the countenance of a woman, who, though little known in the first societies, could, at least, introduce him to her own ; especially, as the vanity of displaying his riches was one of his predominant passions.

Mrs. Prouting, in return, naturally expected many douceurs for herself and husband : by her persuasions Chowles had
been

been induced to employ the interest of his purse to bring him into parliament ; a material convenience to a younger brother, who, figuring away upon a scanty fortune, was loaded with debts.

To spare Chowles the *ennui* of solitude during the summer, Mr. and Mrs. Prouting obligingly took up their residence with him in the country ; and, to save him trouble in town, they undertook to do the honours of his house whenever he had company, which was frequently the case.

But with all this appearance of cordiality, very little, in fact, subsisted between them. Chowles neither wanted memory nor cunning ; the former faithfully retained all the flights and mortifications he had experienced in his youth, from herself and family ; and the latter penetrated through all the artful schemes that both the husband and wife

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formed

formed for the promotion of their own interest, at his expence.

Mrs. Prouting, who flattered herself she should be of immense consequence at a fête given by her cousin, readily undertook to speak to several ladies, to request they would invite, in the name of Chowles, a sufficient number of fashionable people to make a very brilliant ball. He himself determined to send a card to Lady Wilmington and her daughters, as he admired Lady Bell, and chose to consider her and her mother as acquaintances, since the night he had obtruded himself upon them at the opera. But though many of the great ladies in town were making interest to get to this ball, Lady Wilmington, thinking very differently from them, received his invitation with disdain, and ordered her porter to return the card, which, she said, must have been left by mistake. Lady Isabella,

bella, therefore, did not go, to her very great mortification, to this splendid fête.

So many persons having the liberty of giving invitations, the ball was one of the greatest crowds ever known, and occasioned innumerable mortifications to Chowles; for, in general, the fine people assembled paid very little attention to him, unless it were to laugh at, or make him ironical compliments. Some thought only how they should escape home unhurt; others were intent merely on their own amusement: some, indeed, admired his fine plate, and the decorations of the apartments; but this gratification to his vanity was sadly counterbalanced by the torture it gave him to see greasy heads leaning against his silk hangings; warm hands passing over his highly-varnished cabinets; and his capital pictures *viewed* with the tips of fingers.

Emma, the secret object of the fête, and whose smiles might have consoled

him for all these grievances, did, indeed, by her mother's command, consent to dance with him; but before they had gone down three couple, not without infinite labour, a very great lady with a large party suddenly pushing their way into the room, Chowles, by their interruption, was separated from his partner, whom he never could find again, till, overcome with heat, fatigue, and vexation, he found himself unable to renew the dance.

His only hope now was, that supper would afford him some rest, and that he should have the comfort of sitting near Emma; but he was so much annoyed with the scramble and confusion of people getting to the supper-room, that he gasped for breath as he sunk into a seat, with which he was complimented, next to an ugly old Duchess.

The fine speeches that she and several other persons made him, on the
magni-

magnificence of the entertainment, somewhat cheered his spirits, till, unfortunately, they were again depressed by seeing, as he stood up to take a view of the company, at another table, Emma, more lovely than ever; her eyes lighted with pleasure; sitting next to Lord Miramont, who seemed unusually attentive to her.

This, indeed, was one of the most agreeable evenings she had ever known; for she had danced with the Marquis, and afterwards he had placed himself by her side, at supper. Immediately after it ended, he went away; but as she loved dancing, and then had so excellent a partner as Sydney, she endeavoured not to regret the other. Yet, as soon as she had gone down the dance, the charms of the ball ceased for her; and, to avoid conversing with Sydney, she pressed her mother to go home.

Mrs. Prouting, though she had been less disappointed than her cousin, had not met with half the attention she expected ; therefore, she did not contradict him when he asserted, after the house was clear, that, in entertaining very fine folks, who thought their company did him honour, he had put himself to a very enormous expense, and suffered incredible fatigue, to very little purpose.

CHAP. XII.

A FEW days after the ball, Emma received a letter from Du Masson, with whom she occasionally corresponded; which, after slightly touching upon his own affairs, contained a detail of circumstances of uncommon distress that had come to his knowledge, relative to a French family of the first distinction, lately arrived in England, and now lodging (as he said) in a garret, in a small street, near the Haymarket.

Du Masson had much eloquence in his style; and, though not insensible to the distresses of any unfortunate person, to those of his countrymen he was susceptible beyond measure, provided they were *bons Catholiques* and *Royalistes*. He concluded a most pathetic narration, by

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conjuring

conjuring Emma to find out these noble emigrants; and, as far as possible, by herself and friends, to afford them relief.

Much less than he said would have sufficed to melt her soft heart into pity, and to stimulate her to make every exertion in favour of these sufferers. But, unfortunately, her purse, at this time, happened to be at a very low ebb; for, with more vanity than prudence, she had spent in dress no trifling sum; and, ashamed of applying to her father again, who had so liberally supplied her, she sat despondent, lamenting her own extravagance.

From her mother she had no hopes of assistance; for, besides observing that her compassion never extended to foreigners, she well knew that she was continually making new purchases; not so much in the ornamental way, as in what she called great bargains, which she treasured up
for

for future occasions; and she often grumbled that her husband, who had got such an increase of fortune, instead of letting her spend what she thought necessary to appear in a proper style in London, rather chose to throw away his money in absurd alterations at Downton, which would always be a dull out-of-the-way place; and also in idle projects and speculations, which she neither did, nor wished to understand.

Emma's only hope, therefore, rested on a few of her opulent acquaintance, whose benevolence she determined to solicit on this occasion, but not till she herself had investigated the real situation of the French family; for which purpose, without declaring her design, she borrowed her mother's carriage the following morning; and, leaving it in the Haymarket, she sallied forth, attended by a footman, in search of the house described by Du

Masson, which, after some difficulty, she found.

It was a little mean place, in a bye street, the lower part of it occupied by a turner's shop; the first floor by a woman, who washed and mended lace; and the upper rooms by these unfortunate emigrants.

It did not occur to her, till the moment that a dirty maid opened the street door, that her visit to these strangers might appear odd and impertinent; but, having got so far, she determined to proceed; and after presenting them, in the name of Du Masson, with a small packet, containing three guineas, sealed up in a piece of paper (all she possessed) she resolved to depart instantly, without waiting till they opened it.

Upon her enquiry whether she could see the French Ladies, the maid answered
in

in the affirmative ; and, præceding her up stairs, opened a door, crying out, “ One wants you, Ma’am :” then, beckoning to Emma to enter, she closed the door after her ; and the former found herself awkwardly obtruded on strangers, who seemed not less disconcerted than herself by her abrupt entrance.

She ventured, however, to apologize in French ; and, as she spoke, the softness of her accent, the respectful civility of her expressions, and the blushes which covered her cheeks, wrought so powerfully in her favour, that the elder of two Ladies in the room sprang towards her, exclaiming, “ *Seigneur Dieu ! mais c’est un Ange, qui nous tombe du Ciel !*”

Emma then presented her packet, as a commission with which she had been charged, she said, by M. Du Masson, her friend ; and, to avoid answering any questions, she was preparing to retire.

But the old Lady, looking surprized, said she knew no person of that name, excepting a poor old priest, an emigrant, like herself, with whom, however, she had a very slight acquaintance; and, tearing open the paper, she insisted it was impossible he could send her the enclosed.

“ If, Madam,” said Emma, “ it is the Duchefs of ———, whom I have the honour of addressing, there certainly is no mistake; and, having performed my commission, I beg leave to wish her a good day.”

The Duchefs made a gesture of astonishment upon hearing her name, and her eyes filled with tears, whilst she seemed hesitating, whether she should keep the money she still held in her hand. At length she said, “ My pride, I know, is blameable: it ought to stoop to our humiliating wretched situation; if not on
my

my own account, for the sake of those helpless innocents (pointing to two children): I will, therefore, accept of this bounty, come whence it may."

The air of dignity which accompanied her words, gave her rather the appearance of conferring than receiving a favour; yet it was but too evident, that never people stood more in need of assistance than herself and family.

She was a tall noble-looking woman, a little bent, seemingly more by sorrow than by age; and her whole person denoted want and neglect.

An old man, whom she introduced as her husband, and who bowed, without speaking, whether from natural or acquired insensibility, his feelings having, perhaps, been deadened by his sufferings, seemed to take no interest in what was passing. He stood immoveable by the
fire,

fire, watching a saucepan ; and his dress, which was an old velvet coat, a bag wig, and, over that, a dirty night cap, singularly contrasted with his occupation.

By a window sat a young woman ; who, after rising, for an instant, when Emma entered the room, reseated herself, and continued her work, as if she grudged every minute she passed unemployed.— She was very pretty, though pale and languid, and Emma felt particularly interested for her.

The Duchess apologized, that her daughter-in-law continued at her needle. “ Alas !” said she, “ she works from day-break till very late at night, to get bread for her poor children.”

The needle now, for an instant, was suspended, whilst the young woman held her hand over her eyes, with an expression of woe, which penetrated to the heart
of

of Emma, who was on the point of advancing to say something consoling to her; but she checked herself, feeling it indelicate to notice her emotion; and, not to trespass longer on this family, she took her leave, firmly resolved to try to procure them, at least, the necessaries to comfort and cleanliness; for she had observed that they had only one wretched bed, besides a straw mattress, spread on the floor, upon which were lying the two children. Three half-broken chairs, and an old table, completed their stock of furniture. That day she was to dine at Chowles's; and there she hoped, where there was such unbounded wealth, she might easily obtain a trifle for her purpose. The interval before dinner was so short, when she got to Hanover Square, that no opportunity offered of mentioning what filled all her thoughts.

But, after dinner, when coffee was brought into the drawing-room to the
Ladies,

Ladies, consisting only of herself, her mother, and Mrs. Prouting, she determined to make her first attack on the charity of the latter. In as few words as possible she began relating her little tale; when Mrs. Mourtray, interrupting her, said, "I am quite tired of stories of emigrants;" and Mrs. Prouting, suddenly starting up, exclaimed, "O Lord! talking of emigrants! I have such a treasure to shew you!"—and then, for an instant, disappearing, she returned with a little white *barbet* in her arms. "Did you ever see such a love?" cried she.

"Very pretty, indeed!" said Emma, "but let me finish my story: I am sure it will move you very much."

"Rather let me tell you how I came by my dog!—Think of my luck in getting him, and so cheap too!—only eight guineas!"

"Very

“ Very fortunate, indeed!—O! that you would but give me only the quarter of this sum for the poor !”

“ Look at his pretty black eyes! Do you know he can lay in my muff; but he shall have a nice bed, that he shall !”

“ The people I am telling you of have a most wretched bed, and only *that*, and one mattrass, amongst them all !”

“ Shocking indeed! Don’t you think he ought to be shaved to look like a lion !”

“ Indeed, I do not know,” cried Emma, quite disgusted; and, though almost hopeless of success, bent on perseverance. “ Let me entreat you,” she continued, “ to contribute some trifle: I should think myself obliged to you for half-a-guinea.”

Mrs.

Mrs. Mourtray, moved by her earnestness, gave her a guinea ; but Mrs. Prouting said, coldly, " You mean, I suppose, to make a raffle ? I am very ready to subscribe, as far as a guinea, if they have got any pretty things to dispose of ; but I should like, first, to know what they are, and if you have seen them."

" I have seen nothing, Madam, but extreme want and misery ; however, I will trouble you no further on the subject."

" Really, Miss Mourtray, you cannot think how very poor I am."

" Yet, Madam, you can give eight guineas for a dog !"

Mrs. Prouting coloured, and the entrance of the Gentlemen put an end to the conversation. Mourtray, his son, and Sydney, accompanied Chowles : the latter
had

had taken a fancy to Sydney the night he gave the ball; because, though not invited by him, he had shewn him the civility and attention he thought due to the master of the entertainment.

Though Emma had succeeded so ill in her benevolent design with Mrs. Prouting, she entertained very sanguine hopes of being made ample amends by Chowles, who was so profuse in his expenses, that, if even his heart was not warmed by charity, he would be liberal from ostentation, especially as he seemed so desirous of conciliating her favour.

Instead, therefore, of avoiding him, as usual, she remained on a sofa, in a niche, at a little distance from the rest of the company, where, as she expected, he joined her. Suspecting that a pathetic tale would make little impression on his dull organs, she jocosely told him that she had a design on his purse; and having a high

high opinion of his humanity, had no doubt of receiving an immediate proof of it, in favour of a very distressed French family.

Chowles, who was highly delighted at her eagerness to speak to him, let his under lip gradually fall as she proceeded in her speech, and seemed much puzzled what to answer. However, after assuring her that he would do any thing she pleased, he endeavoured to turn off the discourse.

This Emma would not suffer; and, to bring him to the point at once, she said:—
“ Well, Mr. Chowles, how far do you mean to indulge yourself in giving to these noble sufferers?”

“ Indulge, indeed! Pretty sort of indulgence, by jingo!”—adding, in a mumbling voice, something about dupes, impostors, and French cheats; which Emma interrupted

interrupted by saying, she had witnessed herself the distress she related.

“ O! I have no doubt of this, Miss Mourtray,” said he, “ and it is all mighty moving, to be sure. But, Lord bless you, if I was to listen to half the stories of the kind I hear every day, and give here, and give there, I should not have a farthing myself; and then who would encourage the arts, as I have a pride in doing?— Not your fine Lords, I am sure: their money goes more readily to the gaming table; but I tell you, Miss Mourtray, it is such honest fellows as me, who, by their own industry, have made their fortunes, and have the spirit to spend it properly, who”

“ It is on that liberality of mind I depend,” interrupted Emma; “ therefore I apply to you in preference to others.”

“ O, cer-

“ O, certainly ! you are quite right. But, as I was going to tell you, if a man has a capital picture, or any thing else that is curious on his hands, why, he naturally brings it to Simon Chowles ; for I’m the person, do you see, who, without haggling, pays down, at once, his money, and there’s an end of it ; for, you know, I hate shabby doings.”

“ Would tō God you loved benevolent ones ! Then you would open your purse on this occasion.”

“ O ! I will ! but tell me what recompense will you make me ? I know what would make me give you any thing, even my old Japan cabinet.”

“ Your old Japan cabinet !” repeated Emma, repenting exceedingly that she had been pleading to such a man ;—“ I want nothing, Sir, from you for myself, and

and I am sorry to have even spoken to you in behalf of others."

"Lord blefs me!" cried Chowles, preventing her from moving: "Lord blefs me! How easily beauties, and fine Ladies, take offence! Why, now, did not I, at the first, tell you I would do something for these foreign folks?"

"I beg your pardon, Sir, if I misunderstood you; and I rejoice, for your own sake, that your heart is not inaccessible to pity."

"Will your's feel any for me, my pretty nut-brown?" said Chowles, ogling her, as he thought, tenderly.

"I have often told you, Sir, that I do not understand your taking the liberty of thus addressing me; and, as I see you are again wandering from the subject we were upon, I shall leave you."

"Well,

“ Well, to please you, and make my peace, you may tell these people to call upon my clerk, at the counting-house, and he will see what can be done for them.”

“ Good Heaven, Mr. Chowles! You forget their rank in life! I am sure I could not propose to them so degrading a step.”

“ Odds bobs! how you talk! I like beggars being degraded, indeed! But, to satisfy you, I will see them myself, if they will call here any day, at four o'clock.”

But Emma, who now dreaded the coarse mode in which he would give relief, declined accepting any from him, and hastened to join her mother.

Sydney, without meaning to listen, had over-heard great part of the dialogue between her and Chowles, which he confessed

fessed to her, at the same time requesting she would allow him to send five guineas to her *protégées*, to which she consented with thanks.

Emma, in her way home, determined that she would apply next to Lady Wilmington; who, being so nobly born herself, would undoubtedly, she thought, hear with commiseration of the unmerited misfortunes of persons of her own rank; and that her sentiments must be very different from those of the groveling Chowles, whose character was a compound of meanness and ostentation.

Eager to make this experiment, Emma went the next morning to Grosvenor Square; and, to her no small satisfaction, found the Countess at home, and with her none but her daughters, and Lord Miramont.

After the discouraging events of the preceding evening, she could not relate her tale without some degree of hesitation; and her voice faltered as she added—that, knowing Lady Wilmington's goodness, she presumed to solicit her assistance on this occasion.

While she had been speaking, her Ladyship had not attempted to interrupt her: she was too well bred; but she could not entirely suppress some very disheartening yawns, which Emma construed as a most unfavourable presage of what was to follow.

“This is a very dismal story, indeed, Miss Mourtray!” said she, “I really wish you had not told it me; for, you know, I am extremely nervous, and I shall not get it out of my head all the day. Besides, the Fontelieus are a branch of the

Duc

Duc de ——'s family: they came to England with William the Conqueror."

"I knew, Madam," cried Emma, with reviving spirits, "I knew that I might depend upon your benevolence."

"You do me but justice; and I give you my word, I will take the earliest opportunity of leaving my name with the Duchefs."

"My dear Madam!" cried Emma, "though a visit from your Ladyship might gratify her extremely, if she could receive you properly, it is at present more urgent (if you will excuse my saying it) to assist her with common necessities."

"Very true; but, unfortunately, you come at a most unfavourable moment; for both last night, and the night before, I lost no less than five and twenty gui-

neas! Lady —— managed the pool, and scolded all the time; so no wonder I lost; and little Lord ——, who can do nothing else but play at cards, lost twice as much, because he played longer; and then, afterwards, he went to faro, which I never play at."

"Your Ladyship was, indeed, very unlucky; but you may recover your losses, which, I apprehend, will not be the case with the poor emigrants."

"I used to doat upon the French," cried Lady Bell, who had not yet spoken: "formerly they set us beautiful fashions, and they were gay, and quite the thing. But now I *shirk* them; for they look so shabby, and are become so troublesome."

"Is not that rather their misfortune, than their fault?" asked Emma.

"May

“ May be so; but, to avoid their plaguing me, I make it a rule to have nothing to say to them.”

Emma, who attended little to Lady Bell, and who durst not renew her application to her mother, sat pensive; only now and then she ventured to cast an anxious look towards Lady Wilmington, to watch for some favourable indications of benevolence in her countenance, towards those whom she had eagerly acknowledged, as part of her Lord's family.

The Countess, who read her thoughts, after a short silence, said, “ I shall certainly, hereafter, do something to make this poor Duchess more comfortable; but, at present, the small trifle I have at my command is neither fit for *me* to send, nor for *her* to receive.” She spoke these words with great dignity and self-approbation, and then left the room.

Lady Elizabeth had already glided away; and Lady Bell protested she had not a fix-pence in her pocket, which Emma readily believed, knowing that she constantly exceeded her allowance, contracted debts, and sometimes even condescended to borrow of her. Had Lord Wilmington been present, Emma might have been tempted to apply to him; though, since the conversation that took place relative to the colours, she had been shy of speaking to him.

But Lord Miramont's behaviour, during the course of her visit, filled her with amazement and vexation. He had stood the whole time, lolling over the back of a chair, now twirling a whip, then humming an opera air, totally inattentive to what was passing, and not once opening his lips.

Excessively

Excessively provoked at such insensibility, Emma would not deign to apply to him, and scarcely courtesying as she passed him to leave the room; she began, in her way home, to scrutinize her heart, with an uncommon degree of severity.

“How came I,” thought she, “ever to be fascinated by this man? It must have been by his exterior alone, and the splendour of his situation! What wretched motives for my foolish predilection!—Yet I must own, that he is very agreeable and good-humoured: so are many worthless people. But what are Lord Miramont’s pursuits? Can I recollect any other than those that tend to the gratification of his passions? How unfeeling did he appear just now!”

She was continuing these reflections, when they were interrupted by hearing herself

herself called by the object of them, who, with a quick step, joined her.

“ I feared,” said he, “ I had not escaped in time to have the pleasure of overtaking you, Miss Mourtray.”

Emma, coldly, bent her head, but went on in silence.

“ Do you know,” continued he, “ if I were anxious to gain a cause, I should wish extremely to retain you to plead it; for persuasion dwells in your eyes and voice.”

“ I have no reason to think so,” replied she, gravely, displeased with his flattery; “ for my first attempts in this way have been extremely unfortunate.”

“ Only with those persons, who, for various reasons, were likely to be callous.
My

My aunt, though she has many excellent qualities, is, as you cannot be ignorant, rather lofty in her ideas: her pride would not suffer her to present a small donation; and, I suppose, she really just now has not much to bestow; for, before you came, she had been lamenting her extraordinary ill luck at cards; and people, after losing, are not apt to be very liberal."

"I suppose so," was Emma's laconic reply.

"Now, in regard to my cousins," continued he, "what could you expect from them? The decoration of their persons, I dare say, entirely exhausts their finances; and they have no care, or business, in this world, but to look pretty. Thus you see, Madam, I have accounted why the hearts of three of your auditors were shut against you. The fourth, who
frankly

frankly avows he lives for pleasure alone, always hastens to get rid of all unpleasant sensations : your story imprinted some on my mind ; I, therefore, hurried after you, to entreat your acceptance of this ;"— and he presented her with a fifty pound note.

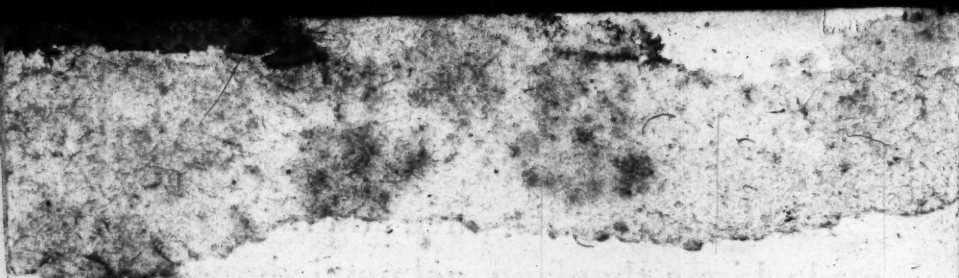
Emma blushed deeply as she received it :—" O ! Lord Miramont !" cried she, " how unjustly I thought of you ! I am quite ashamed of myself."

" You have no cause to accuse yourself," said he : " I am very sensible my actions but too often depose against my moral character ; but my heart, at least, acquits me of inhumanity. I did not, however, wish to make a parade of my feelings in Grosvenor Square, where they would be little understood ; but to you I wished to disclose them."

Emma,

Emma, equally delighted and surprized, made him a thousand acknowledgments of gratitude; and, as he did not leave her till she reached her father's door, she had time to relate every particular; not only relative to the Duchefs, but likewise of the scene that passed in Hanover Square, which diverted him extremely.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.



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END OF THE FIRST VOLUME